

Continuation . . .

Continuation...

(Past, Present & Future 1983–2008, Volume 2)

History of Bihar School of Yoga
under the guidance of
Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

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In humility
we offer this dedication to
Swami Satyananda Saraswati,
who is
inspiring and guiding
Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
to live as a sannyasin.



Swami Sivananda Saraswati — The Mandate



Swami Sivananda Saraswati, the great luminary of the 20th century, was born on the 8th September 1887 at Pattamadai (Tamil Nadu) into a family of pious and God loving people. His ancestors were famous Sanskrit scholars and many renowned philosophical books were written by them.

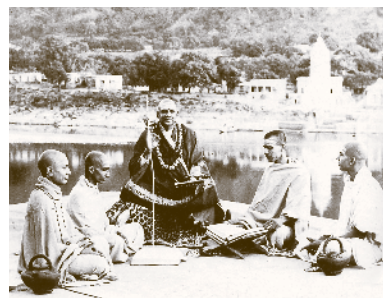


From early childhood he had the gift of divine vision, renunciation, love for all and the spirit of giving freely and sharing without restraint. Even as a small child, he showed compassion for the poor, fed the hungry and showed the uncommon gift of equal vision and boldness to stand against the prejudices of his time.

As the desire to serve and help others was foremost in Swami Sivananda's heart, it was natural that he should choose to study medicine. He had a phenomenal memory and could retain whatever he read. He was extremely industrious and even spent his holidays in the hospital to acquire more knowledge. He excelled in sport, singing, drama and fencing. Bold and cheerful, he always stood first in his class. After completing his studies, Swami Sivananda started his medical practice and successfully ran a medical journal.



The spirit of service led him to Malaya where he worked in a rubber estate hospital for seven years.



To serve people and share what he had was his inborn nature. He never demanded any fee from his patients and often would give them money from his own pocket for their special diet and other requirements. Through his service and kind and loving nature, he became a friend of all, the poor labourers from the estate as well as the local citizens. The popularity he enjoyed was not earned in a single day. It meant very hard work, unflagging tenacity, effort and indomitable faith in the principles of goodness and virtue and their practical application in his daily life.

In spite of his extremely busy life, Swami Sivananda was always regular in his daily worship, prayers, yogasanas and study of sacred scriptures. This ignited his innate spirituality and with a heart purified by selfless service, he had a new vision. He was deeply convinced that there must be a place – a sweet home of pristine glory, purity and divine splendour, where absolute security, perfect peace and lasting happiness can be attained through self-realization. He gave up his practice and all his belongings in a state of total renunciation and returned to India in 1922, to live the life of a penniless sadhu.

He arrived at Rishikesh in 1924, where Swami Vishwananda Saraswati initiated him into sannyasa on 1st June of the same year. Swami

Sivananda's approach to spiritual matters was unique. Although he lived a life of extreme austerity and simplicity in the tradition of the ancient rishis of India, he never neglected selfless service. He fetched water and brought food to old and sick sadhus, cleaned their huts, gave them medicine and massaged their feet. From the money he received from his insurance policy, he started a charitable dispensary to help and serve pilgrims, sadhus and the poor. He saw God in every being and treated the sick with sincerity of worship.

Swami Sivananda's fiery determination to help and serve the whole of humanity and share whatever he had, found yet another expression. From 1927 he started sharing his spiritual experience by writing articles and books. His enthusiasm for helping others took the form of a continuous flow of knowledge, which resulted in more than three hundred books. Divine wisdom and powerful, inspiring thoughts that flowed from his lips in a continuous stream influenced people from all over the world. Every word he uttered, every sentence he wrote, was charged with rare spiritual power, because he taught what he himself practised in his daily life. He lived what he believed in, what he taught and preached. There was no difference between his actions and his innermost feelings.

The Divine Life Society was founded in 1936 with the aim of worldwide

dissemination of spiritual knowledge and service to mankind. From his small kutir on the banks of the Ganga, Swami Sivananda's influence spread throughout the world. It did not take long for seekers to be drawn to his magnetic personality. Though he was unassuming and totally devoid of doership and attachment, the fire of his inspiration attracted an incessant flow of spiritual aspirants and his ashram, known as the Divine Life Society, grew rapidly and soon became known throughout the world. In the course of his lifetime, Swami Sivananda received the homage of saints and holy men, ministers and politicians, philosophers, doctors and artists.

Swami Sivananda's love for the Ganga was unprecedented. He lived in a small set of rooms on the banks of the holy river for more than three decades, only because from there he could commune with Mother Ganga day and night. Till the last moment of his life he drank Ganga water and worshipped her. He also wrote a book on the celestial river. He earned the name of Sankirtan Samrat, as he used to sing God's name with a sweet melodious voice and often would dance for hours in a mood of ecstasy.

Moved by the cruelty of World War II, Swami Sivananda started the Akhanda Mahamantra Kirtan, round the clock, non-stop chanting of Mahamantra, in order to release a con-

tinuous stream of peace currents throughout the whole world. The Akhanda kirtan commenced in December 1943 and is still going on.

To give systematic spiritual training and guidance to seekers, the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy was established in 1948. Swami Sivananda's concept of the yoga of synthesis, with the simultaneous practice of bhakti yoga, karma yoga, raja yoga and jnana yoga enabled spiritual seekers to emphasize any of these according to their attitude and nature. His tenfold path – serve, love, give, purify, meditate, realize, be good, do good, be kind, be compassionate, became a roadmap for spiritual aspirants worldwide. Swami Sivananda never lets us forget that our own salvation lies in the spiritual awakening of humanity as a whole.

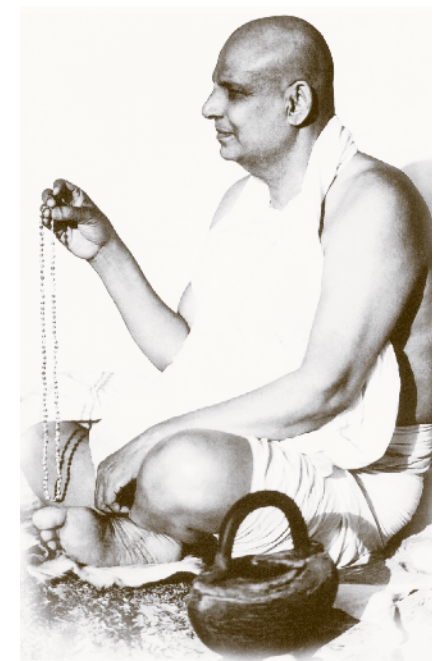
Swami Sivananda was a visionary who was able to foresee the needs of human society. He made yoga a practical subject which could be applied in people's lives, a tool to further develop and expand the horizon of the mind, to develop sensitivity to feel for others and to rise above petty egocentricity, arrogance and the inability to adjust and accommodate. He raised the goal of God-realization before the people's eyes as the only real purpose for human birth. He acquainted millions with the

facts and details of spiritual life and trained many sannyasins of an extraordinary calibre through whom his mission is carried on to this day. To spread yoga 'from door to door and from shore to shore' was a mission that Swami Sivananda entrusted to one of his brightest disciples, Swami Satyananda, who developed the ancient systems of tantra and yoga to their highest potential and brought them literally to each and every corner of the world. Through his dedicated sannyasins, Swami Sivananda saw the fulfilment of his mission before attaining mahasamadhi in 1963. To this day and for ages to come, his light spreads far and wide for the spiritual upliftment of humanity.

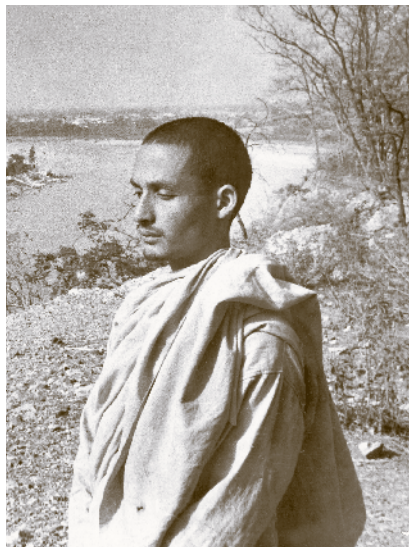
"To be a cosmic friend and benefactor, a friend of the poor, the forlorn, the helpless and the fallen is my creed. It is my sacred creed to serve the sick, to nurse them with

care, sympathy and love; to cheer up the depressed; to infuse power and joy in all beings; to feel oneness with each and everyone; and to treat all with equal vision. In my highest creed there are neither males nor females, neither peasants nor kings, neither beggars nor emperors, neither teachers nor students. I see the Almighty Lord alone in one and all beings."

—Swami Sivananda



Swami Satyananda Saraswati — The Accomplishment



Swami Satyananda Saraswati was born in 1923 at Almora (Uttarakhand) into a family of farmers. His ancestors were warriors and many of his kith and kin down the line, including his father, served in the army and police force.



However, it became evident that Sri Swamiji had a different bent of mind, as he began to have spiritual experiences at the age of six, when his awareness spontaneously left the body and he saw himself lying motionless on the floor. Many saints and sadhus blessed him and reassured his parents that he had a very developed awareness. This experience of disembodied awareness continued, which led him to many saints of that time such as Anandamayi Ma. Sri Swamiji also met a tantric bhairavi, Sukhman Giri, who gave him shaktipat and directed him to find a guru in order to stabilize his spiritual experiences.

In 1943, at the age of 20, he renounced his home and went in search of a guru. This search ultimately led him to Swami Sivananda Saraswati at Rishikesh, who initiated him into the Dashnam Order of Sannyasa on 12th September 1947 on the banks of the Ganges and gave him the name of Swami Satyananda Saraswati.

In those early years at Rishikesh, Sri Swamiji immersed himself in guru seva. At that time the ashram was still in its

infancy and even the basic amenities such as buildings and toilets were absent. The forests surrounding the small ashram were infested with snakes, scorpions, mosquitoes, monkeys and even tigers. The ashram work too was heavy and hard, requiring Sri Swamiji to toil like a labourer carrying bucket loads of water from the Ganga up to the ashram and digging canals from the high mountain streams down to the ashram many kilometres away, in order to store water for constructing the ashram.

Rishikesh was then a small town and all the ashram requirements had to be brought by foot from far away. In addition there were varied duties, including the daily pooja at Vishwanath Mandir, for which Sri Swamiji would go into the dense forests to collect bael leaves. If anyone fell sick there was no medical care and no one to attend to them. All the sannyasins had to go out for bhiksha or alms as the ashram did not have a mess or kitchen.

Of that glorious time when he lived and served his guru, Sri Swamiji says that it was a period of total communion and surrender to the guru tattwa, whereby he felt that just to hear, speak of or see Swami Sivananda was yoga. But most of all through his nishkama seva he gained an enlightened understanding of the secrets of spiritual life and became an authority on yoga, tantra,

Vedanta, Samkhya and kundalini yoga. Swami Sivananda said of Swami Satyananda, "Few would exhibit such intense vairagya at such an early age. Swami Satyananda is full of Nachiketa vairagya."

Although he had a photographic memory, a keen intellect and his guru described him as a versatile genius, Swami Satyananda's learning did not come from books and study in the ashram. His knowledge unfolded from within through his untiring seva as well as his abiding faith and love for Swami Sivananda, who told him, "Work hard and you will be purified. You do not have to search for the light; the light will unfold from within you."

In 1956, after spending twelve years in guru seva, Swami Satyananda set out as a wanderer (parivrajaka). Before his departure Swami Sivananda taught him kriya yoga and gave him the mission to "spread yoga from door to door and shore to shore".

As a wandering sannyasin, Swami Satyananda travelled extensively by foot, car, train and sometimes even by camel throughout India, Afghanistan, Burma, Nepal, Tibet, Ceylon and the entire Asian subcontinent. During his sojourns, he met people from all strata of society and began formulating his ideas on how to spread the yogic techniques. Although his formal education and spiritual



tradition was that of Vedanta, the task of disseminating yoga became his movement.

His mission unfolded before him in 1956 when he founded the International Yoga Fellowship Movement with the aim of creating a global fraternity of yoga. Because his mission was revealed to him at Munger, Bihar, he established the Bihar School of Yoga in Munger. Before long his teachings were rapidly spreading throughout the world. From 1963 to 1982, Swami Satyananda took yoga to each and every corner of the world, to people of every caste, creed, religion and nationality. He guided millions of seekers in all continents, and established centres and ashrams in different countries.

His frequent travel took him to Australia, New Zealand, Japan, China, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, USA, England, Ireland, France, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden, Yugoslavia, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Russia, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Dubai, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Colombia, Brazil, Uruguay, Chile, Argentina, Santo Domingo, Puerto Rico, Sudan, Egypt, Nairobi, Ghana, Mauritius, Alaska and Iceland. One can easily say that Sri Swamiji hoisted the flag of yoga in every nook and cranny of the world.

Nowhere did he face opposition, resistance or criticism. His way was unique. Well-versed in all religions and scriptures, he incorporated their wisdom with such a natural flair that people of all faiths were drawn to him. His teaching was not just confined to yoga but covered the wisdom of many millennia.

Sri Swamiji brought to light the knowledge of tantra, the mother of all philosophies, the sublime truths of Vedanta, the Upanishads and Puranas, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, Islam and Christianity, including a modern scientific analysis of matter and creation. He interpreted, explained and gave precise, accurate and systematic explanations of the ancient systems of tantra and yoga, revealing practices hitherto unknown.

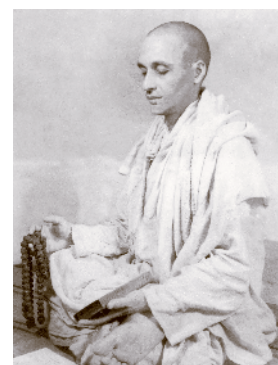
It can be said that Sri Swamiji was a pioneer in the field of yoga because his presentation had a novelty and freshness. Ajapa japa, antar mouna, pawanmuktasana, kriya yoga and prana vidya are just some of the practices which he introduced in such a methodical and simple manner that it became possible for everyone to delve into this valuable and hitherto inaccessible science for their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual development.

Yoga nidra was Sri Swamiji's interpretation of the tantric system

of nyasa. With his deep insight into this knowledge, he was able to realize the potential of this practice of nyasa in a manner which gave it a practical utility for each and every individual, rather than just remaining a prerequisite for worship. Yoga nidra is but one example of his acumen and penetrating insight into the ancient systems.

Sri Swamiji's outlook was inspiring, uplifting as well as in-depth and penetrating. Yet his language and explanations were always simple and easy to comprehend. During this period he authored over eighty books on yoga and tantra which, due to their authenticity, are accepted as textbooks in schools and universities throughout the world. These books have been translated into Italian, German, Spanish, Russian, Yugoslavian, Chinese, French, Greek, Iranian and most other prominent languages of the world.

People took to his ideas and spiritual seekers of all faiths and nationalities flocked to him. He initiated thousands into mantra and sannyasa, sowing in them the seed to live the divine life. He exhibited tremendous zeal and energy in spreading the light of yoga, and in the short span of twenty years Sri Swamiji fulfilled the mandate of his guru.



Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati — Continuation



1960–64: Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati was born at Rajnandgaon (CG) on 14th February 1960 into a lower middle class family home. His father was later known as Swami Satyabratanaanda Saraswati and his mother as Swami Dharmashakti Saraswati.

1964–70: Swami Nirnanjan came to his guru, Swami Satyananda Saraswati, at Munger (Bihar) and joined the Bihar School of Yoga on

26th July 1964. Under the tutelage of Sri Swamiji, he received intense gurukul education and training. Swami Nirnanjan was educated in languages, scriptures, sciences and contemporary subjects through the system of yoga nidra developed by Sri Swamiji.

1971–72: Initiated into the Dashnami tradition of sannyasa on 11th January 1971 by his guru, Swami Satyananda. On 1st March 1971 he accompanied Sri Swamiji to London (England) and Belfast (N. Ireland), where he remained with Swami Atmananda Saraswati to assist in the development of the Satyananda Yoga Centre in Belfast.

He also lived at Satyananda Yoga Ashrams in Newcastle-on-Tyne with Rishis Arundhati and Vasishtha Saraswati, furthering his cultural education, and in London with Swami Pragyamurti Saraswati.

During this time, he travelled throughout Scotland, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany and Austria, conducting yoga classes and yoga training courses.

1973–74: From England, on 11th January Swami Nirnanjan travelled to Bogota in Colombia, South America, and extensively toured Colombia and Ecuador. Then he returned to India with a delegation of South American yoga aspirants to participate in the Golden Jubilee Celebrations and the World Yoga Convention being held in Munger.

1974–75: He then travelled with Sri Swamiji to participate in yoga conventions and programs in India at Ambikapur, Korba, Janjgir, Bilaspur, Raipur, Bhilai, Durg, Mahasamund, Dhamtari, Jagdalpur, Rajnandgaon, Gondia, Balaghat, Panhmore, Jabalpur, Sagar and Satna in Madhya Pradesh.

In July, he returned to Colombia and travelled extensively through El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Venezuela, Ecuador and Chile, conducting yoga training programs and establishing yoga teaching centres.

During this period, he also researched the existence of yoga

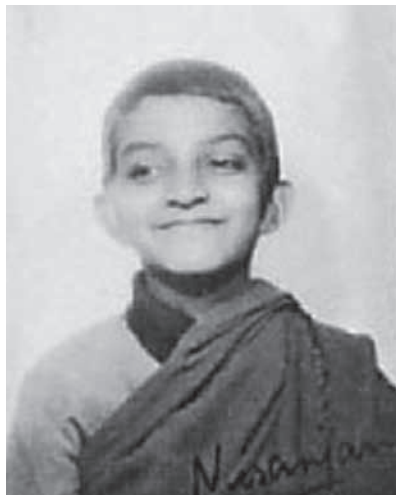
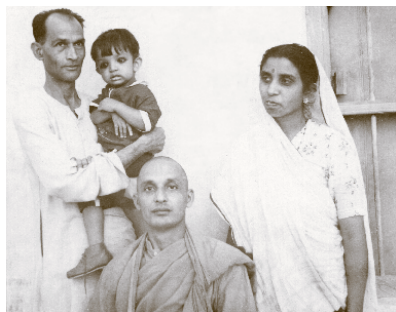
systems, practices and theories in the pre-Colombian culture of South America, and gathered pictorial, sculpted and documented evidence of yoga practices, postures and theories in the Aztec, Chibcha, Inca and Mayan civilizations.

1976–77: En route to Australia, Swami Nirnanjan conducted yoga programs in Chile and French Polynesia. He then participated in the World Yoga Convention in Sydney with Sri Swamiji. He remained in Australia and carried out research on pranayama and Kirlian photography with Dr Graydon Rixon in Sydney and other research on music and mantra at Toowoomba University, Queensland, with Dr June Jackson.

Along with research he also assisted in the formation of ashrams at Manly, Avalon, Brisbane, Newcastle, Surfers Paradise, the Blue Mountains, Gold Coast, Canberra, Wagga Wagga, Hobart and Queenstown.

Then Swami Nirnanjan travelled to New Zealand to guide yoga programs in Waitakere and Auckland, before returning to Australia to join Sri Swamiji for Guru Poornima at Satyananda Yoga Ashram, Mangrove Mountain.

1977–78: Returning to India with Sri Swamiji on 7.7.77, he became the editor of the monthly magazine *Yoga Vidya* and worked as Sri Swamiji's secretary.



He also lived at and worked to develop the Satyananda Yoga Ashram in Kolkata and conducted extensive yoga programs in Kharagpur, Haldia, Rishra, Asansol, Burnpur and Dhanbad, as well as participating in the Thane Yoga Convention with Sri Swamiji.

Swami Niranjana also took part in a successful diabetes research project conducted by BSY, Munger, with the cooperation of Burla Medical College, Sambalpur, and Dr N. C. Panda, Director, Health Services, Govt. of Orissa.

Swami Niranjana then went on a padayatra of Orissa state, travelling through Bolangir, Bhawanipatna, Kantapalli, Keonjhar and Sonabeda to promote the Yoga Convention at Sambalpur.

1979: Swami Niranjana travelled to Europe where he conducted yoga programs in Greece (Athens, Kalamata) with Swami Sivamurti Saraswati and training programs for the European Union of National Federations of Yoga in Switzerland (Zinal).

He then guided programs in London and Belfast, before joining Sri Swamiji for the Irish International Yoga Convention held at Dublin University. Then he accompanied Sri Swamiji to Zinal for the yearly congregation of European yoga teachers.

As an emissary of Sri Swamiji, Swami Niranjana guided the yoga

training course for the Italian Federation of Yoga in Rome and toured various locations in Italy.

He then went to Spain and assisted in establishing Satyananda Yoga centres in Barcelona, Manresa, Zaragoza, Valencia, Madrid and Malaga.

1980-82: Travelling to USA on 1st March 1980, Swami Niranjana conducted two whirlwind tours of the United States, visiting, teaching, training, guiding and lecturing yoga aspirants in all the major cities of New York, New Jersey, Virginia, Washington DC, Michigan, Illinois, Georgia, Louisiana, Missouri, Montana, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, Nevada and California. As a result of this tour, Satyananda Yoga Ashram USA was formed in October 1980.

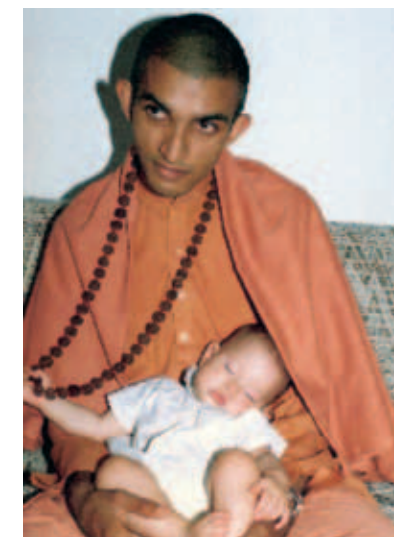
Residential ashram and teaching centres were established in San Jose, New Berry Springs, Charlottesville, Baton Rouge, Ann Arbor, Elizabeth, New York City, Salt Lake City, Deming and Berkeley.

During this period, Swami Niranjana met, interacted, worked and lived with eminent scientists, spiritual masters, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian groups and heads of different organizations, such as Swami Satchidananda Saraswati, Swami Vishnudevananda Saraswati, Dr Ramamurti Mishra, Swami Nadabrahmananda

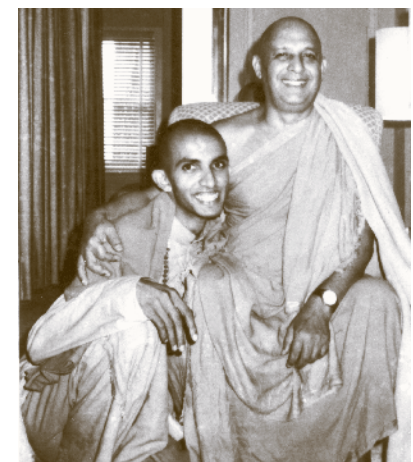
Saraswati, Rabbi Gelberman, Swami Rama, Swami Bua and others.

Swami Niranjana conducted research on drug addiction and relaxation response with Dr Todd Mikuriya at Gladman Memorial Centre; and on meditation with Dr Joe Kamiya, Nobel Laureate in alpha research.

It was at this time that Swami Niranjana acquired skills in audio/visual technologies and in flying a Cessna plane. In August, Swami Niranjana organized a tour for Sri Swamiji throughout the USA in which Sri Swamiji was accompanied by Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati.



In October, Swami Niranjana travelled to San Juan, Puerto Rico, to participate in the International Yoga Teachers Associations program, which was guided by Sri Swamiji. There he received the mandate of his guru, to return to India by 16th January 1983.





January

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati was appointed to the Presidency of Bihar School of Yoga (BSY) on 19th January by Sri Swami Satyananda, who became Founder President of the yoga institute. Swami Niranjan had served his guru since the age of four, and had recently founded Satyananda Ashram in the USA.

Swami Niranjanananda's activities were centred in Munger where construction was the main work while he reacclimatized to India and its people. He was based in the new BSY centre in Munger called Ganga Darshan. Situated on the hillock where the ancient palace of King Karna stood and from where the legendary half-brother of the Pandavas distributed gold and other treasures to his subjects, Swamiji's first task was to reshape the dilapidated structure as per his guru's vision. Work continued on the foundations of the seven-storey Main Building. A two-storey building, Shakti Vihar, containing the printing press and residential quarters, and the three-storey Guest House, were both completed this year.

February

Swamis Nischalananda and Agehananda from BSY conducted yoga sadhana camps in Korba and Vishnupur, Bhagalpur district. Swami Amritananda from BSY inaugurated the five-day Ramcharitamanas program in Bariarpur.

Dr Swami Shankardevananda from BSY conducted a yoga therapy camp for asthma, diabetes and hypertension in Jamshedpur.

February–March

Sri Swamiji toured England. He conducted seminars and gave lectures and satsangs in France, Italy, Switzerland and Spain.

April

Swami Amritananda inaugurated the Ramayana Sammelan in Begusarai.

Swami Vedananda from BSY conducted a yoga seminar for the army at Kalimpong.

Swami Hridayananda from BSY conducted a yoga program in Begusarai.

April–May

Sri Swamiji travelled to Australia, conducting seminars on tantra and kriya yoga, and giving satsang and diksha.

May

Swami Amritananda visited Spain, Morocco, UK and USA.

June

Sri Swamiji inaugurated the filming of Chandi at Chandisthan, Munger, and a special pooja at the Chandi temple.

Swami Vedananda conducted a yoga camp in Begusarai.



July

Sri Swamiji was the chief guest at Patna's Annual Rotary Club meeting and conducted public discourses. He then gave satsang and diksha at the Kolkata ashram before travelling to Raipur for three days of Guru Poornima celebrations.

Swami Atmadarshan from BSY conducted a seminar in Muzaffarpur.

August–September

Swami Nityabodhananda from BSY conducted a yoga camp at the P&T Recreation Club in Patna and lectured at the Bhilai Steel Plant.

September

Swami Vedananda conducted a yoga seminar at the Yoga Mitra Mandal, Gorakhpur.

November

Sri Swamiji presided over a seminar on the yogic management of hypertension and stress-related diseases, organized by the Kolkata ashram. He then travelled to Satyananda Ashram, Mangrove Mountain, Australia, for a prolonged stay until April 1984.

December

Swami Niranjanananda inaugurated the Blind Relief Camp at Bariarpur.

Swami Amritananda presided over the 2nd Mithila Yoga Sammelan, Begusarai.

Swami Nityabodhananda held a seminar at Hindusthan Copper in Ghatshila.



Chronicles

One Sunday afternoon as I sat under a bael tree in the Peacock Garden at Ganga Darshan, watching the students make revelry with kirtan and dance, I spotted a young seeker with a look of intent curiosity. Soon after she came up to me and said, "Swami Niranjan is so young, but he also appears so powerful. How did he come to be the head of such an institution?"

I found myself travelling back in time to 1983, the year when the history of Bihar School of Yoga took a new turn. Sri Swamiji had announced to everyone that he was embarking on a new journey of his life. In a satsang in Kolkata he said, "There have been moments in my life after Swami Sivananda's mahasamadhi when I have clearly felt his presence and heard his voice. Last year in Puerto Rico I was sitting alone on the seashore when I heard him say to me, 'You are now free from your ashram life.' He released me. A slave became free. I called Swami Niranjan and told him, 'Now my plan is clear. I'm not going to work any more with the administrative part of Bihar School of Yoga or any institution. You cancel your trips in America and return to Munger as soon as possible.'"

On 19th January, Basant Panchami, 1983, Sri Swamiji formally left the Presidency of BSY. Swami Niranjan, though barely been seen in Munger in the last 11 years, was appointed as the President of BSY and later on as Swami Satyananda's spiritual successor.

This announcement created ripples, not only in India where disciples lived and worked with Sri Swamiji, but also around the world. Everyone wondered what was going to happen. In America people felt they were losing Swami Niranjan who was so dear to them and in whom they had seen the promise of a new beginning.

A year before, another person who would soon play a pivotal part in Sri Swamiji's mission had come to live in the ashram. Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati, better known as



Swami Satsangi, received poorna sannyasa initiation on Guru Poornima, 1982, and from hereon would always be seen by Sri Swamiji's side whether in India or overseas. As they travelled through England, France, Italy, Switzerland, Spain, Australia and New Zealand this year, his message remained the same. "For 20 years I have been working to spread yoga from door to door and shore to shore in obedience to my guru's command. Now I have been given new instructions and my duty is to humanity."

What did he mean? We asked ourselves this many times. Some felt that he would travel continuously around the world. Others thought he was merely freeing himself from the administrative side of things and placing that work on his brilliant disciple, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati. It was acknowledged that Swami Niranjan was already well respected in many countries; however, these new responsibilities entailed his renouncing all that freedom and adventure, and settling down in Munger to unceasing hard work and to the demands of inspiring and guiding the disciples and institutions which were now spreading the science of yoga.

Swami Satsangi, who always displays astute clarity, can give an apt view of events. So what better than to share her insight into the situation in 1983! Of course in retrospect we can see the changes were even wider than she speaks of, but things unfold in their own time.

Continuation . . .

"1983 heralds in new dimensions and horizons for BSY. Building an institution is itself a mammoth task, but to find suitable successors to maintain the high ideals and standards is no less important. Right from its inception, Swami Satyananda has played the dual role of guru and administrator, two roles diametrically opposed and contradictory to each other, which led him into many difficulties from time to time, and which he survived with unsurpassable skill. Let me explain this further.

We are all familiar with the role of a guru. He inspires, instructs and is the guiding light to many lives. For those of you who have a guru, it is unthinkable to live this life without

nurturing that relationship. It would be tantamount to having no eyes to see or ears to hear, but have you ever stopped to wonder how a guru meets the demands of his disciples? How is it that not just one or two or three, but thousands and millions of people all over the world are able to draw energy from that one source? It is obvious that he is able to delve into deeper



and higher states of consciousness where no duality exists, where he is able to sift the true from the untrue, the mundane and the gross experience from pure experience. It is this ability which enables him to deal with the problems of the people with accurate precision.

However, if at the same time he has to also play the role of administrator, it is necessary that from time to time he must return or come down to the practical, day-to-day affairs of life. So on the one hand he must go deep within, and on the other he must externalize that same consciousness. Of course this constant fluctuation from higher to lower states of mind is not a trifling matter and not easily attainable, for one state of mind is not complementary to the other. Only a jivanmukta, one enlightened in this life, can do it with utmost ease. Swami Satyananda has been the epitome of such a person. His decisions as administrator have been flawless and his guidance to people illuminating.

For how much longer must these demands press on him? Sri Swamiji often jokingly says, 'My life has been divided into 20-year cycles. I was born in 1923, I joined my guru's ashram in 1943, I opened my ashram in 1963, and now, 1983 is the last turning point, I retire.' When he sees the disappointed and disconsolate look on our faces, he always hastens to add, 'When I say retire, I mean as an administrator. I shall continue to guide and inspire the people as long as I live.'

Another very relevant point which Sri Swamiji often mentions is that it is always necessary for the founder of an institution to step down and install his successor during his lifetime, so that the succeeding person can master the work thoroughly. This is especially relevant to a sannyasa institution where nothing really belongs to any particular person.

The inability of many spiritual leaders to effect this change has been instrumental in the downfall of many institutions. We have seen many jivanmuktas who function dynamically during their lifetime, but have been unable to leave behind pillars of strength. Obviously, at some time, they must give their responsibility to others and for the fulfilment of that responsibility the decision must be taken at the correct time. After all, a flower only blossoms when the soil and the season are right. Sri Swamiji, who has always maintained accurate timing in making his decisions, has chosen 1983 to nominate his successor. This decision will bring a host of questions to people's minds. Possibly

you are among those who wonder about the future of BSY after Sri Swamiji retires from the administration.

As you will see, Sri Swamiji, with his meticulous eye for detail, has been thinking not only of the present but also years into the future. After all, the disciples and devotees all over the world must have the assurance that the institution which they have worked so hard for will not dissolve. At present BSY has many ashrams, innumerable centres and a vast number of inspired schools, thousands of teachers and a host of sannyasins of different nationalities and religions spread out over the world, with the headquarters at Munger. To support them it is necessary to have adequate teachers, an efficient administration, a proper internal management and inspiring guidance.

The sannyasins who have been trained by Sri Swamiji as teachers are of a very high calibre and have been producing excellent results and responses wherever they go. These sannyasins, whose number is always on the increase, will continue to spread the teachings far and wide. For the administration, Swami Niranjanananda, heading the Board of Directors, will handle all affairs directly. For a disciple it is of paramount importance that he should be able to follow every command of his guru, verbal or otherwise. He should be able to anticipate and remain constantly alert to every need of the guru; only then can the guru transmit his knowledge and guidance to the disciple and continue his mission through the disciple.

Swami Niranjanananda has always maintained the ideals and standards of such a disciple. Although only 23 years of age, his experience, maturity and astute judgement can be compared to a person twice his age. He has travelled widely from the age of 11, perhaps little knowing the immense responsibilities that would befall him later. However, judging from his past record, one feels that the responsibility rests on very young, but capable shoulders.

In the sannyasa parampara or tradition, according to the guidelines set down by Adi Shankaracharya, it is the

responsibility of the guru to impart his knowledge to worthy disciples so they may continue the work even after the guru relinquishes his duties. The work, after all, is being done with a definite purpose in mind and is not the whim of an individual. It has a far greater and wider vision, the benefits and far-reaching effects of which should be felt not only in

so that not only our children but our grandchildren and great grandchildren may know and be able to judge for themselves the best way of life.

For the continuation and harmonious flow of these resolves, it is not only necessary to set up a strong foundation for the institution, but also to externalize our support. In this



this decade but in decades to come. This culture, way of life and philosophy, must not become extinct with the ravages of time, and neither should it be restricted only to a few people. Rather, we must diversify, we must spread the systems of yoga to all corners of the world. We must preserve this fund of knowledge which can help us in every sphere of our lives

respect we look forward to the enthusiastic support of people from every corner of the world. The history of BSY shows that the vast number of well-wishers, devotees and disciples have always extended their help in whatever way possible. Obviously the future depends on the continuation of support provided thus far.



Now that Sri Swamiji is no longer at the helm of administration, the range and scope which he will be able to cover will increase considerably. In this respect we can look forward to seminars and conventions in different countries, cities, towns and villages, which may be arranged for him to preside over, so that, in the words of his guru, he may continue taking yoga from door to door and from shore to shore."

For a while there was silence. Then came my companion's next question, "Was the situation so clear to everyone in 1983?"

"No," I replied, "Everyone was unsure of the significance of these changes. Swami Niranjan had become president, but superficially nothing else had changed. Sri Swamiji was readily available to all his overseas disciples as he travelled from country to country giving satsang and initiations. New books on yogic techniques were written by Swami Satsangi under his guidance and his lectures were collated as the various volumes of *Teachings of Swami Satyananda*.

"Swami Niranjan had farewelled his students in the USA and returned to Munger where he began to quietly reacquaint

himself with the condition in India where many new situations had arisen. So the first year was spent getting to know the people with whom he would be continuing the work of BSY, and supervising the on-going construction work at Ganga Darshan.

"Some were astonished that Sri Swamiji would entrust such responsibilities to a young man barely 23 years old, but to others, such as Swami Anandananda from Italy, the connection was perfectly natural from the beginning. So here he is – Ananda, tell us of your first meeting with Swamiji."

One single current

"It was in the early morning, as I came out of my room along the corridor of the Kitchen Building, that I saw Swami Niranjan for the first time in person (I had already met him in a dream). Our meeting was just eye contact, brief but full, and there was a reciprocal recognition. It must have taken just a few seconds, and we both kept moving in our respective directions.

That day was my birthday, and on that evening I was initiated into sannyasa by Swami Satyananda. Swami Niranjan was present, and called the names of the new swamis as we received our dhotis, malas and directions from our guru. That same day, Swami Niranjan had been nominated as President of BSY. For me, the arrival of Swami Niranjan and his role in the ashram is spontaneously connected with my being here too. There is no thinking about it or trying to assess it.

He opened a new experience for me, which was that I could talk and relate to him as a friend, something which I could not really do with Sri Swamiji because of an overwhelming sense of respect. What has really struck me has been this spontaneous, open and playful relationship, and I just feel that I have really accepted him in my life because I was also accepted by him. He makes me feel a member of the ashram 'family'. His openness and spontaneity have also taught me that these are qualities I need to develop in myself. In fact, one of the most important teachings that I have received from him is to be myself.

In January 1989, during one of my visits, I was in my room with a cold and fever and heard a knock on the door. When I opened it, I saw Swami Niranjan standing there with a smile and at that time I felt an explosion of love in my heart. It was exactly the same experience that I'd previously had with Sri Swamiji, and in fact it was then that I perceived the guru aspect of Swamiji, thus completing the different aspects of our relationship. As different aspects intermingle, there are still times when I relate to him as a friend, companion, older brother, guru brother and as an inspirer or guru.



In more recent times, I have heard him speak of the different qualities and capacities of Sri Swamiji and I perceive them in him. When I think of him, or speak about him now, it isn't as the successor of Sri Swamiji, because to me the idea of a successor suggests a separate entity. I think of him as an extension of Sri Swamiji, like when two electric wires are joined or welded together, they conduct one single current which travels over the whole distance. In fact, this is what impressed me most and still impresses me after many years

of interaction with Swami Niranjan. He is the living example of a perfect disciple.

Just as Swami Satyananda accomplished the mission of Swami Sivananda, Swami Niranjan has been totally dedicated in accomplishing Swami Satyananda's mission. This has become visible in the flourishing of Ganga Darshan, in establishing Bihar Yoga Bharati, world's first yoga university, in inspiring and guiding thousands of people all over the world, in developing the institutions founded by Sri Swamiji, in establishing new

institutions and in taking absolute care of everything related to his guru.

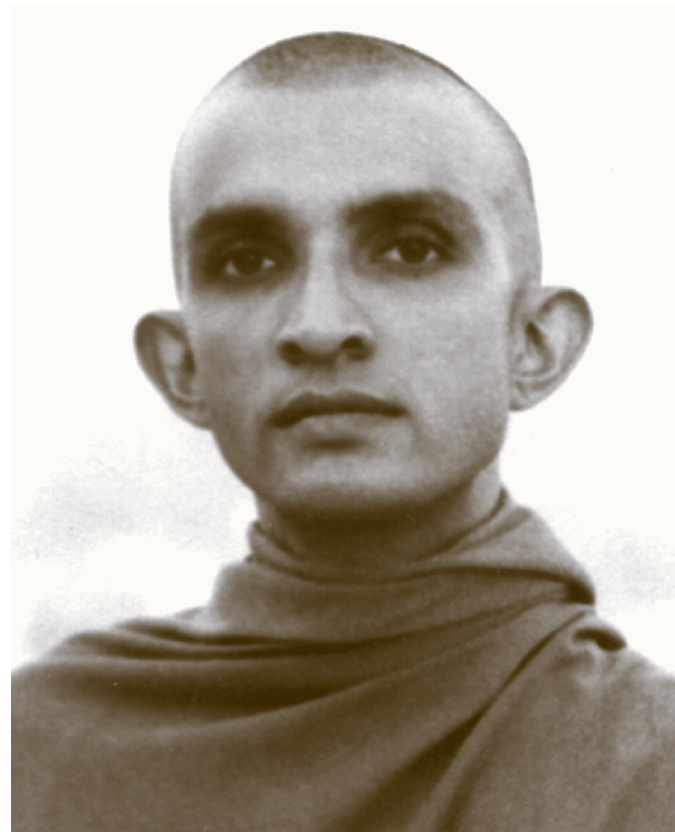
In the past few years I've had the opportunity of being with Swamiji on many occasions while in India or during programs in different countries. That is when I came to recognize the multiplicity of Swamiji's personality. Wherever Swamiji goes he touches the hearts of all present. Through his wisdom, sense of humour, simplicity, appropriate examples, stories and jokes, he brings the necessary understanding of yoga and spiritual life. But most of all, he inspires people.

It is also remarkable how he always takes care of everybody and everything. When he gives a talk in a huge crowded hall, he makes sure that those seated far from the stage can share his presence just like those in the first row. During the last 12 years of Sat Chandi Yajna at Rikhiapeeth, when the crowd is swelling to over 10,000, with 1,000 of them being children, and many events are taking place simultaneously, I've seen and been impressed at how Swami Niranjan can have a bird's eye view on everything, knowing perfectly what each one of us is doing. It has happened many times that in crucial moments, when prasad is being distributed, kirtan is going on, the offering is being made, VIPs are being escorted to their place, children are singing and dancing, trucks full of parcels are being unloaded, I would pass by him while taking photos and he would stop me and say, 'Set the camera in this way', or 'Take a photo from that angle', or 'Use the flash.' Nothing escapes his awareness, nothing goes unnoticed, he has an immediate presence of attention on every detail, he can see the big picture and the finest detail simultaneously.

Swami Niranjan's total dedication to his guru and the guru's mission, his joyful and playful nature, his wisdom in teaching and guiding, his smile that can melt the hardest heart, his pureness and many more are the qualities that have touched me deeply and made me love him."

As my companion and I continued our conversation, the rhythm of the revellers picked up. More than fifty students, arrived from different corners of the world to the dusty town

of Munger to learn yoga, had congregated this afternoon in the lush garden where the sunlight filtered through summer fruit trees. The favourite Sunday gathering spot resembled a talent showcase ground: a quiet girl sat painting the scene in a corner, an exuberant gymnast manoeuvred herself around a rope hung to a tree, a South American adept played on the djembe and everyone clapped enthusiastically to 'Jaya Jaya Jaya Shambho . . .'



"Would Swamiji approve of this hullabaloo?" asked the newcomer by my side.

"As long as it does not break the ashram discipline and remains within the boundaries of appropriateness," I replied. "The ashram is natural ground for flowering of the personality, and like an indulgent father Swamiji allows us to express our

talents. However, if we fail to uphold the ashram tradition he is the strictest of disciplinarians."

"Perhaps the early years he spent travelling different countries gives him an easy understanding of the whims of the new generation," ventured my companion.

"Yes, but at heart he is a traditionalist and will not brook any deviation from the path."

"Was this evident when he first took over the reins of Ganga Darshan?"

"He certainly arrived with a vision. In fact, the first interview that he gave after assuming the Presidency of BSY made us aware of his views clearly. With the benefit of hindsight it is especially interesting to see what he had to say."

Glimpse into the future

"Ganga Darshan is presently passing through a momentous and historical period of growth and expansion. At every level we can see new developments. The ashram is in transition from a swami-oriented ashram to a sadhaka-oriented ashram.

Seva is the foundation for both. Now, the main emphasis will be on preparation of qualified teachers who will be able to meet the challenges of future philosophies. It has been human experience that when a system, science or philosophy reaches a point of growth and development, other ideas come to challenge it. Therefore, as swamis of the yogic tradition, it will be our responsibility and duty to develop our understanding and knowledge about yoga and to be able to meet these new challenges.

Investigation of yogic practices in itself will be of great importance in the future. Until now, our understanding of yoga has been very limited. We know about hatha yoga, raja yoga, karma, bhakti, jnana, mantra, laya, kriya and kundalini yoga, etc., but there are still many techniques which will need to come out from the hidden sources of tantra and Vedanta. Tattwa shuddhi is an example. It is a practice which not many people know about, although it is mentioned in Mahanirvana Tantra and Srimad Devi Bhagavatam. So research into new aspects of

yoga and bringing to light all the so-far unknown practices will become a major contribution of Ganga Darshan in this yogic panorama. Apart from this, there will be medical and scientific research which will require the time and effort of practically every ashramite. It will give them a specific sadhana so that they can grow in their own internal life, and at the same time allow researchers to find out what happens physiologically and psychologically.

Books will form a very important part of our work at Ganga Darshan because they are the most practical method of conveying thoughts from one person to another. The magazines Yoga, in English, and Yoga Vidya, in Hindi, will continue. Once we are able to resettle into the new environment of Ganga Darshan and research begins we will have to publish our findings. In January, when I first came, Sri Swamiji was saying, 'Soon we will be settled into research!'

There is a story which can explain what will be happening here. In the beginning there was one single tribe of people. This tribe got involved in exploration of the self and the universe, but due to varying and conflicting ideas it decided to split into two tribes, one group to investigate one aspect and the other to investigate another aspect. One tribe evolved a system for realizing human potential based on manipulating the external environment, trying to mould or shape nature to fit its own requirements. The other tribe, instead of trying to mould nature to suit its needs, moulded itself according to nature, and instead of changing or manipulating the environment, went inside and tried to discover.

This has actually taken the form of two cultures, the western and the oriental. In the oriental culture practically every religion or philosophy that has developed has had its base in looking at one's thoughts, trying to change within, rather than creating a change outside, regardless of external comforts and needs. In the western culture they developed technology to change the environment so that they could live in that environment more pleasantly. The US, Canada and Europe have developed tremendously in the technological aspect. I am sure that they also have many people with great minds who would have

thought of looking within, but nobody really gave any attention to that because the majority of people were involved in a totally different trip. On the other hand, India, Japan, China, etc. developed their own internal technology rather than external.

So, one aspect of Ganga Darshan will be to combine and grow in both these systems. I know this is something people have

always looked at things with a critical eye. I've also discovered that whether we teach only pawanmuktasana for ten years consistently, or we do karma yoga for twenty years consistently is irrelevant. The most important thing is the spirit that carries it through. This spirit which is developing here is the spirit of unity in the midst of diversity. So, I'm thankful to Sri Swamiji for



missed everywhere. The statement that Swami Satyananda has made about yoga being a mighty power and guiding the course of world events will start happening from Ganga Darshan once we are able to bring about this combination of the spirit of internal and external development.

Outside there is nothing happening in this direction at the moment. I've come to this conclusion because I have

creating this situation in which we all are, and I'm also happy for everyone, swamis, sadhakas and visitors who come here because unknowingly, they all act as catalysts, and become instruments.

Discoveries in yoga, research into its physiological, biological and medical effects will happen; research into individual growth will continue, but not only regarding ancient yoga. There will be a new system based on the ancient yoga. As we go more



into the study and research area, new learning opportunities will develop and we will begin to apply yoga in all situations in life and also in day-to-day activities. I do believe that we will be integrating the various yoga practices into music, arts, dance, crafts and other areas.

Another aspect of Ganga Darshan will be ashram community living. The ashram will evolve from ashram-ashram to ashram-community, where all the aspects of life will be looked into,



studied and applied with yogic practices. In the course of time, as we become more established in our practices and routine, we will be introducing yoga to children when they reach the age of receptivity between seven and fourteen.

Right now we have courses of only one month's duration, but in the future we may have a continuous gurukul, so that children can come and go as and when they please. This gurukul, family of the guru, will not be merely an academic school. Rather, the

guru will provide a solid personality structure for their future lives. Whether or not the children will continue their academic education will be their choice. However, we will provide what is not provided in an academic school. They will develop their own inner strength, freedom, self-awareness, their qualities and faculties in a more integrated and harmonious way.

Ganga Darshan will become a very strong base for sannyasa in the traditional aspect, which allows inner growth. Sannyasa



fits in the inner system in which you stop, look, listen and act – you don't dash blindly into something. Of course this system has been the eastern way till now, but it may become the western way in the next 50 years. Karma sannyasa moulds itself into a system where you are dashing ahead. You take karma sannyasa, then if you become aware of the leap that you are taking, you automatically stop, look and listen because it is a blending of two personalities.

I believe the western personality will have a lot to gain from the eastern personality, if it can learn how to find satisfaction with the things it has. This is one reason why so many people from outside are turning towards sannyasa as an alternative way of life. Even then it is hard for someone to surrender totally because the individuality keeps coming up. Even now people of the eastern personality are trying to become western because they are trying to find the independence that

they never had. So now India is going to become fast-paced, whereas western society will become slow-paced, everyone will stop, look and listen. This changeover will take place in the next generation or so.

When this changeover takes place, both societies or both personalities will find certain gaps and we will have to be ready to fill them."

Gurukul Tradition and Ashram Life

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

The gurukul tradition and ashram life are the foundations of spiritual life. Ganga Darshan ashram is a gurukul, the family of the guru, where the spirit and ideals of the masters of the tradition are kept alive. The gurukul represents a tradition of visionaries. Swami Sivananda envisioned that yoga would emerge as the need of society at large. Swami Satyananda structured his guru's vision, developing yoga as a lifestyle, through which we can harmonize and improve the efficiency of our head, heart and hands – intellect, emotions and actions. This is only possible through the lifestyle that one imbibes in the ashram.

In the gurukul a vision to enrich oneself is maintained. Ganga Darshan is dedicated to yoga and composed of people who for a while, a week, a month, a year, a lifetime, wish to experience and devote themselves to the pursuit of this vision. The common vision is learning how to live a spiritual life, not by rejecting material life, but by adjusting and being in harmony with it. In the gurukul, people share the same vision, the same lifestyle and follow the same discipline, living according to the mandate of the guru.

The gurukul represents a continuous tradition. The tradition of Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda continues at Ganga Darshan today. Swami Sivananda emphasized integrated development of the human personality. He believed that to perfect yoga, one had to live in an ashram. Swami Satyananda maintained and developed Ganga Darshan, not as a hotel or

a comfortable resort, but as an ashram with basic facilities, where everyone has the same opportunity to live together and develop their experiences, and to have a focus and a direction for the duration of their stay. For it to become a proper gurukul, future generations also have to maintain the same tradition.

In the gurukul everyone belongs to one family, and it is everyone's responsibility to maintain the energy, vibration, dignity and discipline of the ashram. By developing the attitude that it is your home, you become part of the ashram family. It is



the community effort which maintains the spirit of the tradition. Spiritually, the ashram is just one person, the guru, the rest is only buildings and whether they exist or not doesn't really matter. One has to tune the mind to the frequency of the guru. The interaction and relationship between teacher and student has to be free and open to understand the learning that is taking place.

If we want to derive something substantial, long-lasting and effective from yoga, the physical, mental and spiritual components

have to be integrated. Ashrams exist in order to experience yoga and spiritual life. In the ashram you have to confront your nature, your mind and develop a sense of direction, clarity and discipline for yoga to take effect. This was the teaching with which Swami Satyananda established Bihar School of Yoga.

The teachings of Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda and the teachings of yoga go hand in hand. The eight instructions of Swami Sivananda: serve, love, give, purify, become good, do good, meditate, realize, are combined with the eight instructions of Patanjali: yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi. It is adherence to these principles which determines the continuity of the tradition, not their dilution. It is the continuity of the principles which decides a tradition. That tradition is lived at Ganga Darshan ashram, where yoga is a way of life, not just a practice or an intellectual concept. During your stay you are given the tools and methods with which to experience yoga. In the gurukul environment the teachings of yoga are imbibed as a personal practice and lifestyle. The ashram environment teaches one to live yoga every moment.

The ashram lifestyle is an embodiment of simple living, where a positive attitude and an understanding of selfless service can be developed. When you leave your personal comfort zone and self-created conditionings for a period of time, adjustability and adaptability come into play. The mind becomes receptive. The lifestyle emphasizes personal experience and participation. The ashram routine helps to discipline the mind. For students, the first requirement is being on time for classes and being totally involved in them. The second requirement is learning to practise *mouna*, silence. Observing silence is part of one's sadhana, one's effort to still the chattering mind, to become

the observer, the *drashta*, the seer. For the duration of your stay in the ashram, live that discipline and experiment with it, so that it becomes an ongoing process. The third discipline is participating in ashram activities, like satsang, kirtans or karma yoga, seva. These are the three main disciplines of the ashram.

Seva is the important component of ashram life. Seva is an act of selfless service done without any personal motive or self-gratification. The self-oriented aspect vanishes and one works selflessly, without gaining anything in return. This in turn purifies the heart and creates a deeper connection with other people. Eventually, seva becomes an attitude, which creates a shelter for other people, support, nourishment, inspiration and upliftment.

Yogic discipline is making an effort to gain a deeper understanding of ourselves, to guide our efforts constructively. This is *anushasana*, a self-motivated drive to attain perfection, learning how to interact harmoniously with others. It is a subtle transformation of which you become a witness, which changes your nature, attitude and perception and allows more freedom in your personal expressions. Inner discipline, inner clarity and inner strength develop.

In an ashram, rather than cramming the intellect with information, you try to experience what you know, to harmonize and discipline the inner personality. When you become part of the ashram environment, you also experience a different type of energy internally, which awakens the dormant dimensions of the mind. You begin to see not just with your intellect, but with your heart. You begin to experience not just with your heart, but with your inner mind. You begin to perceive not just through the senses, but through intuitive perceptions.

Therefore, a gurukul is a place where people, for a period of time, create an environment, share the vision, and live with discipline under the direction of the guru, which is specifically intended to help one evolve or grow spiritually and mentally.

In a gurukul you have to change your pattern of thought, change your lifestyle and be open and receptive. Think of the gurukul as an extended family of many unknown people, who have come together. If you feel for them, care for them, have a sense of affinity and closeness with them, you will realize



the validity of the ashram teachings. If you wish to change the quality of your life experiences, you have to make some sacrifices, to move from comfort and luxury to simplicity, from a life based on cravings and desires to a life based on need, and from security to a life of full participation and involvement. To make this transition as smooth as possible, you need to live in the ashram with an open mind. Drop your expectations and become a good receptor of the inspiration which can guide

your life to harmony by tuning yourself to the frequency of the gurukul. When the mental barriers are brought down, a transformation in the personality takes place, which becomes a turning point in one's life.

There has to be an adjustment between spiritual values and material existence. This is where yoga comes in. Learning different branches of yoga opens up different dimensions of experience and perception, which ultimately benefit us. It brings about a learning that becomes a part of life, and which is called applied wisdom. Yoga can be experienced as it is meant to be experienced by cultivating the gurukul bond and adopting the ashram lifestyle.

Swami Satyananda has often said that it was the practical training he received in the ashram that helped him in his life, not the academic learning he received in school. The purpose of the gurukul is to open the mind by learning how to deal with many different situations with a positive, creative, constructive state of mind. By adapting and adjusting, the mind becomes free from limitations and hang-ups. The conditioned mentality changes into an open mentality. The ashram lifestyle provides an opportunity to discover ways to manage the reactions and responses by subjecting oneself to different situations and learnings.

The ashram is not a place of realized people. It is a place of ordinary people who aspire to achieve, to experience and become something in life. The ashram becomes the catalyst where one has to confront oneself and relearn everything from the beginning. If you can imbibe the training and discipline of the ashram, then wherever you go in the world, you are a living representative of the ashram. ॐ



January

Sri Swami Satyananda toured from the Mangrove Mountain ashram in Australia from January to April, giving satsangs and discourses at centres in Sydney, Melbourne, Cairns, Brisbane, Canberra, Rocklyn, Lillian Rock and in Tasmania.

A seminar was held in Haldia, West Bengal, by Swamis Gorakhnath, Hridayananda and Shankardevananda from BSY. Dr Swami Shankardevananda lectured on cardio-pulmonary diseases in Kolkata.

Swami Nischalananda conducted a seminar at the Banshipur Girls' Middle School and a sadhana camp in Korba.

Swami Amritananda toured South Africa for three months.

April–August

Sri Swamiji travelled extensively in Europe. He toured Greece, giving lectures and satsang in Crete, Thessaloniki, Rhodes, Mytilene, Katerini, Alexandropolis and Athens. He was the chief guest of the Italian Yoga Federation in Ciocco and then journeyed on to France and inaugurated the

centre at Toulon. He returned to Greece to conduct the Guru Poonima celebrations at the ashram in Athens. His tour then continued throughout France and Switzerland.

May

Swami Gorakhnath conducted seminars in Raigarh and in Katihar.

Swami Ramrajyam from BSY conducted yoga seminars in Udaipur and Chittorgarh.

Dr Swami Karmananda and Swami Muktananda from BSY conducted a yoga program at Saint Martha's Hospital and lectures at Madras Medical College.

During May and June, workshops were held in Dhanbad and Jamshedpur by Dr Swami Shankardevananda and Swami

Nischalananda, followed by a yoga therapy course in Begusarai and Barauni.

June

Dr Swami Karmananda and Swami Tapasmurti from BSY conducted programs in Perampur.

July–September

Swami Amritananda travelled to Hong Kong and conducted yoga programs in Japan. She then toured the USA.

August–September

Yoga sadhana camps were conducted in Gaya and Chapra by Swamis Prasadnananda and Nischalananda from BSY, and by Swami Nischalananda in Pune.



October

Two associations, named Sivananda Math (SM) and the Yoga Research Foundation (YRF), were established in Munger. Swami Satyananda founded Sivananda Math in honour of his guru. It aims to provide aid to the sick and the poor in the tradition of Paramguru Swami Sivananda. YRF conducts research into the benefits of yoga in various areas.



The next time we met, it was on the open roof of Yoga Arogya. The setting sun had turned the 270-degree curve of the Ganga into a shimmering arc of gold. Closer, the leaves of the ashoka trees fell quietly and the terraced gardens leading

to the Kitchen Building softened the view. Gesturing at the expanse, the exuberant visitor asked, “So how did all this come about?”

I found myself reflecting back to 1984 when Swami Niranjana was assuming charge of things. Sri Swamiji was travelling constantly at this time, and it was under his appointed disciple’s meticulous eye that Ganga Darshan took shape.

Swami Niranjana was in Munger nearly the whole year and by then Shakti Vihar, a building to house the printing press on the ground floor and female residents on the first floor, the Guest House, and the foundations of the Main Building, had all been completed. Landscaping the rocky site began in earnest with new terracing constructed, orchards planted and new

gardens prepared. The kernel of a new group of sannyasins was nurtured, who would be working through his inspiration and guidance.

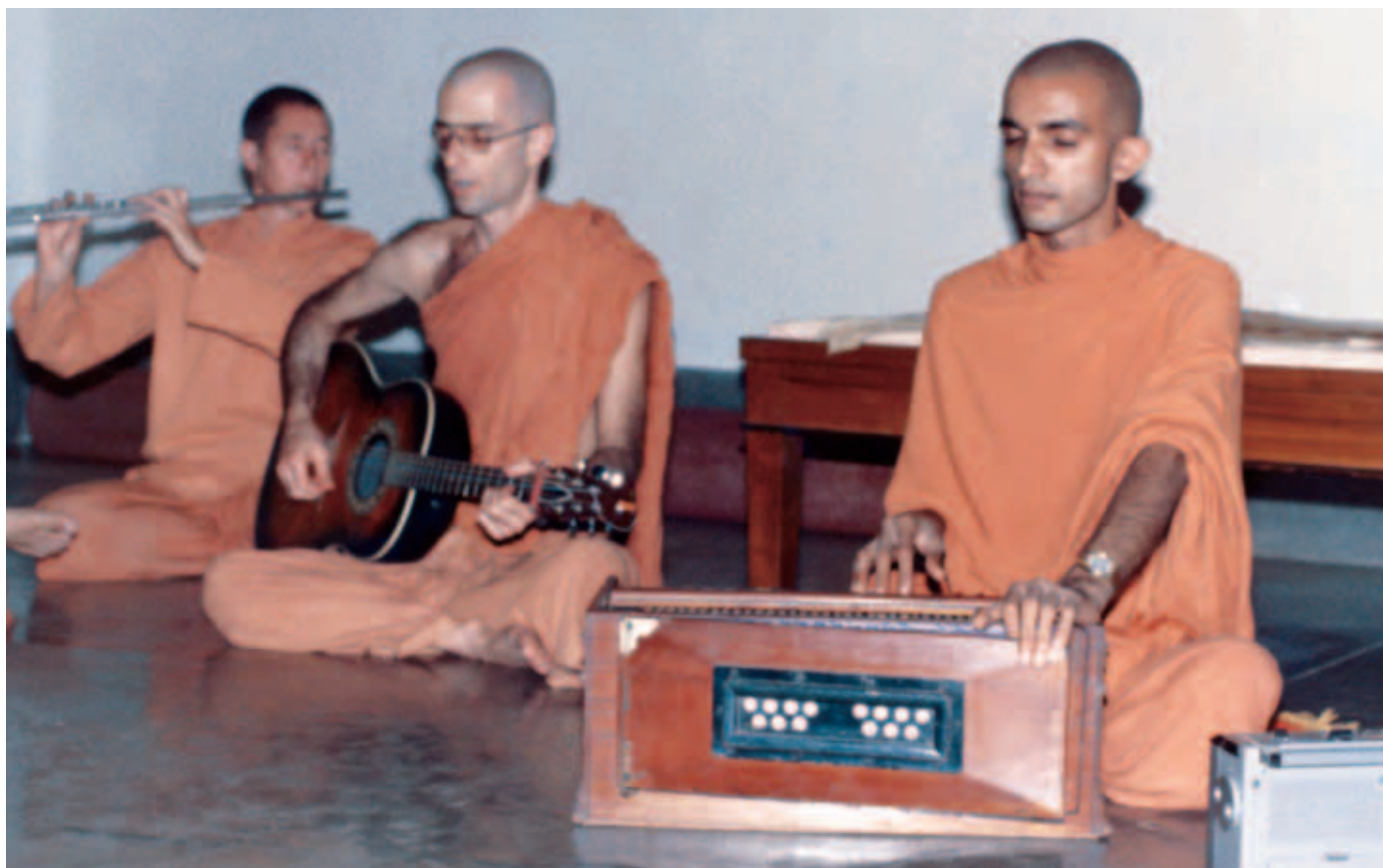
Two associations, Sivananda Math (SM) and Yoga Research Foundation (YRF), were established in Munger. The first, inspired by Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh, was aimed at serving the poor and the underprivileged, and those suffering from difficulties. The second would collate and conduct research into the benefits of yoga using scientific principles.

“It must have meant a lot of work. But there was a large collection of swamis who seemed permanent residents of BSY at that time, wasn’t there?”

“Yes,” I replied, “Many of them had extensive experience of conditions in India, ashram life, and of teaching yoga. But several of them were considerably older than Swami Niranjana, had established ways of doing things, and had no intention of taking him seriously. At this time he was like a young rose, very slender and with some kind of fragrance about him. It was beautiful to watch the way he set about organizing the ashram.”

Sri Swamiji continued to spend most of his time travelling. In India he was attending programs arranged by ashrams in different states and by the Yoga Mitra Mandals working under the umbrella of the International Yoga Fellowship Movement (IYFM). The ashrams and teaching centres overseas had also been making more requests for his time. Usually, during his prolonged absences the different departments in BSY were run by the older, experienced swamis who steered situations and gave instructions. However, Swami Niranjana introduced a more democratic approach by initiating meetings where everyone who worked in a department – whether printing, editing or kitchen – could meet once a week and have equal opportunity to speak. He came to each meeting, listened carefully to the opinions that were voiced and attended to the needs that surfaced.





Just like the ashoka trees he planted which today give the ashram a look of disciplined beauty, method and creativity found a perfect balance in Swami Niranjana's style. For karma yoga, he would make lists in which everyone was supposed to participate, no matter their status, in all the jobs. He included himself in the lists and would come and join in the cleaning, book checking or gardening, but some people just wouldn't. Swamiji was grappling with big egos as people hung on to the past, their genuine attachment to Sri Swamiji and longing to reverse time. His gentle and open approach did not work with everyone; however, they had to admit his creativity and organizational ability as time passed – and it was found he could not be bent or broken; the rose had thorns.

The majority of the resident swamis who had been trained by Sri Swamiji though, welcomed his new ideas and challenges as part of their yogic training. They respected him as Sri Swamiji's chosen successor and came to recognize Swami Niranjana's qualities and follow him spontaneously.

For sannyasins new to Ganga Darshan it was a dramatic time. Arriving at those gates seems to be a turning point in many lives – in 1984 there was a sense of adventure. The whole organization was being thrown into turmoil by Sri Swamiji's decision, and by Swami Niranjana himself, who embodied his guru's resolve. Although the administrative structure at BSY was being completely overhauled, the

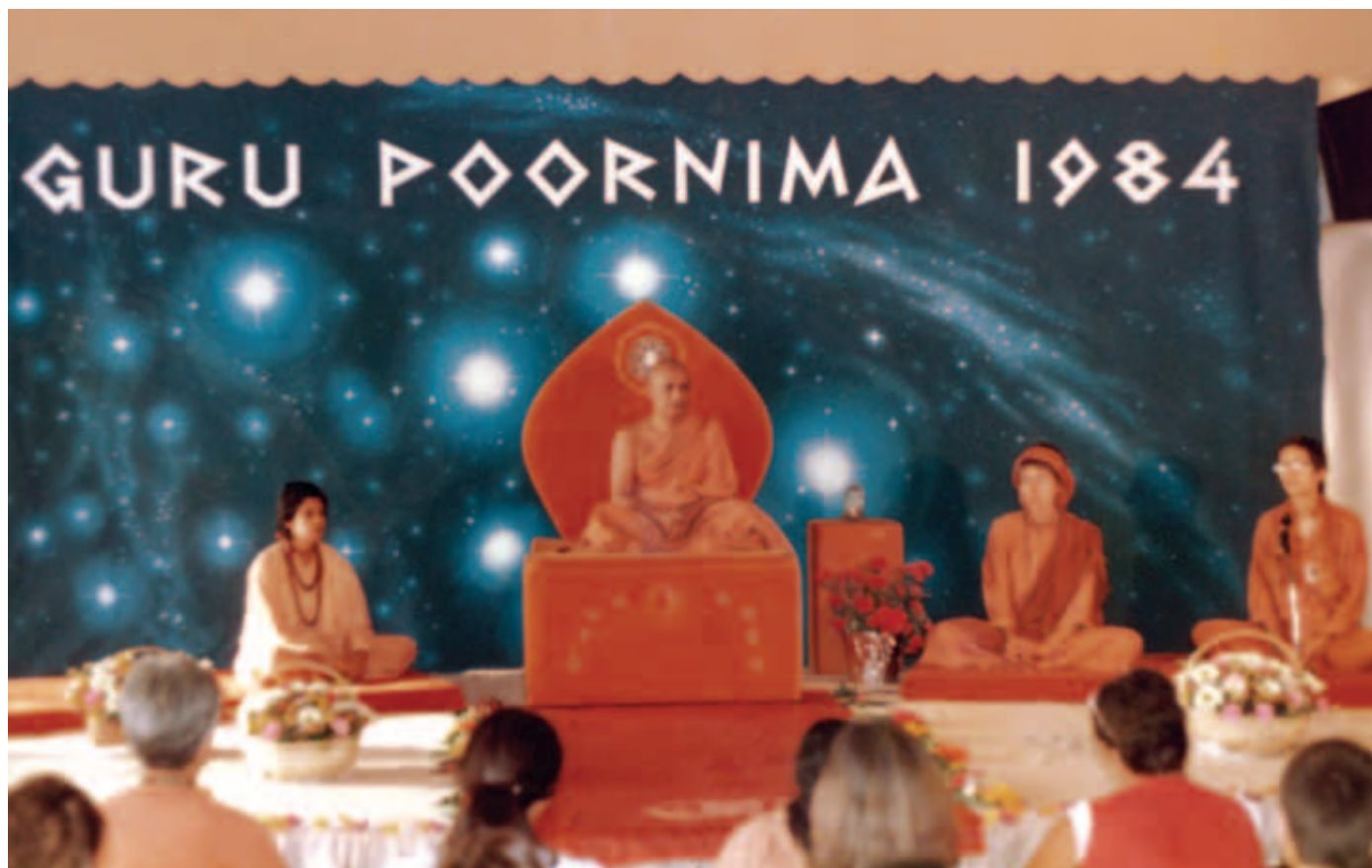
subtleties of the guru-disciple tradition were not lost. People from many different backgrounds continued to appear at the ashram gates and were given the guidance necessary. This was my own experience.

He moved my pranas!

"Swami Niranjana came for the World Yoga Convention to Australia in October 1976. Many yoga students were waiting at Sydney airport for Sri Swamiji, they were in an excited group running up and down a battery of opening and closing sliding doors; I'd left them for a bit of peace. Suddenly the doors directly in front of me opened on three golden, glowing figures. My body remained standing, but a tremendous force of energy left me speechless and thoughtless.

I was clutching a garland of wild carnations which I'd made, and been advised to place around Sri Swamiji neck. It was an impossible thing to do because he was now surrounded by a milling crowd of devotees and journalists. Then the crowd pushed me so that I ended up right in front of him. He could hardly be seen, there were so many garlands, but mine went on too. Immediately he started taking off all the garlands and putting them around Swami Niranjana, Swami Akhandananda and Swami Amritananda.

Our next encounter was in a beautiful big tent. Swami Niranjana was teaching prana vidya to a class of over a hundred people. 'Be aware of prana vayu moving up from navel to throat each time you breathe in,' he said, 'and be aware of apana vayu moving down from navel to perineum each time you breathe in.' 'Funny I never noticed that before,' thought I, totally engrossed in this new and very clear perception. He said, 'Now reverse the process on the exhalation so these two forces merge at the navel centre.' Obediently the two forces turned about and I had a most peculiar sensation of an inner explosion as they surged to and fro, meeting like waves in a blow hole. Simultaneously I became very indignant. 'How dare he!' I thought, 'How dare he move my pranas!' Quite suddenly the class was over and I sat up feeling really riled. I wasn't at all soothed by the Om Shanti and stalked out of the tent.



Our next encounter was on a beautiful summer's evening. Swami Niranjana and Swami Akhandananda were sitting at the end of the veranda and I went there attracted by the most beautiful fragrance. I thought Swami Niranjana must have brought something special from India. I sat down close in the twilight and stretched out – suddenly Swami Akhandananda started telling me to go away. Alarmed, I left and spent an uncomfortable night convinced that the solitary figure in the sleeping bag on the veranda was Swami Niranjana. And he was laughing at me.

So, by the time we met again in Kolkata I was pretty wary. A large group of people had come to India to learn kriya yoga

and although I'd learned the kriyas previously at BSY, I was there too. I hadn't expected him to be there. I'd heard that he was in Europe or America or somewhere, but there he was. His presence made me feel rather anxious, but I reflected that there were a lot of people around and had started relaxing nicely a few hours later, when suddenly I noticed that everyone had gone out; they'd been talking of shopping.

Only he and I were left in the ashram flat and I felt quite alarmed, but he took no notice of me and just kept on playing the harmonium, singing and humming quietly to himself. It was all right, but I could feel myself slipping into a completely different state of consciousness, my awareness of sound vibrations was

completely different from normal and I didn't have any sense of control. Luckily Sri Swamiji returned. He walked in, threw me a look of compassion and took Swami Niranjana with him into another room.

Therefore, you can understand my apprehension when, in 1983, Sri Swamiji advised me to go and live in Munger. I liked India, the trouble was, Sri Swamiji had just finished explaining that a twenty-year cycle had ended in his life, and from then on he wouldn't be spending much time in Munger – Swami Niranjana would be in charge. Still, I gathered what courage I had and arrived in May 1984.

During the next six years I was somehow convinced, despite hours, sometimes weeks of being kept waiting, despite deliberate provocation of my darker nature, despite being given so much work that I was reduced to a skeleton, that Swami Niranjana was my best friend. I felt he accepted me and my criticisms and I could trust him.

In 1990 I was advised to return to Australia to wait for a new sponsorship letter from the ashram as my current visa would not be renewed. For two years, Swami Niranjana steadfastly refused to respond to any normal means of communication like letters or phone calls. 'He's no friend of mine,' I thought. 'No true friend would simply ignore you.' I was driven to use inner resources.





I also thought about things as deeply as I could and it seemed totally clear. If I still wanted sannyasa and his guidance, then I would have to accept the situation. If I wanted anything else, it was readily available.

Returning in '92 was as bad as expected. Swami Niranjan had won, but I find the concept of surrender difficult. It is also difficult to maintain a critical viewpoint, though an independent attitude is absolutely necessary, because around here the experience of things actually working, and of people being set alight by their experiences is, by now, overwhelming. Once more the dimensions of experience are shifting.

So, despite all the liking and disliking, why haven't I quit this path? And, besides all our talks what, in balance, have I gained from this association with Swami Niranjan? He expands the range of awareness. This happens spontaneously because, being with him you know what a person full of love, patience and

inspiration is like. It happens through sadhana, through darshan itself and through satsang. It also happens through hard work and difficult experiences. It includes opening up whole realms of experience which demand to be integrated into your life.

I haven't quit this path because I know I have had the good fortune to be in the presence of guru, and to experience that guru energy field within, which is beyond any form. That inspiration means I now have a clear aim, and to celebrate it I would like to salute all the gurus, beginning with Lord Shiva, who manifest from time to time, yet teach us to merge with them internally and I would salute the One who is guiding me now."

In fact, all critics were silenced when Swami Niranjan gave a meditation class. That this young yogi had mastered the esoteric yogic sciences was evident in the way he could lead his audience into an experience that scaled the boundaries of the body and intellect and reached into a space of transcendence.

Swamiji did not merely impart knowledge, he transmitted understanding. The 24-year-old President of BSY was a siddha.

"I hope we receive a class from him soon," mused the new student.

"In the meantime, let me share with you the transcript of a class Swamiji gave on mooladhara dhyana in France once. It is a brilliant example of the techniques of concentration and visualization he developed 'to increase inner sensitivity and know the experiences of the inner mind', as he stated. We will go straight to the point where the practice starts, after the body and breath awareness stages."

Exploring the cave of consciousness

"Centre your awareness in chidakasha, the space within the head which can be seen with the eyes closed in the form of a black screen. Visualize chidakasha in the form of a cave. The crown of the head is the ceiling of the chidakasha cave. The right

side and the left side of the head are the walls. The forehead is the front wall with the third eye being the opening, the gate. The back of the head is the back wall. Experience the inner space in the form of a cave.

Look all around within you inside the cave.

In the back of the cave there is a small opening. It is an opening which leads into a tunnel. Go towards that tunnel and enter into the tunnel. Absolute darkness. No light. You just have to trust your instinct and follow the tunnel to the other end.

This tunnel passes through the spinal passage and descends to the lower regions of the body. You descend in this tunnel. Despite darkness all around there is no feeling of fear inside. Only a feeling of silence and stillness which envelops you as you descend in the tunnel.

When you reach the base of the spine the tunnel opens up into another cave. This cave is illuminated by a deep, gentle red light. Stand at the opening of the tunnel and see inside the cave. The cave is filled with soft, gentle, deep red light. The light is emanating from a stone which is situated in the centre of the cave. Walk towards the stone.

As you walk towards the centre you can feel the energy that pervades the cave. A feeling of intense vibration and power, all around you within the cave.

As you reach the centre stone from where the light is radiating, you notice that the stone is in the shape of a shivalingam. A shivalingam which is glowing totally red, and a gentle light is emanating from this shivalingam, bathing the cave in its soft glow.

Sit down in front of the stone. Feel the energy and the power in the form of a very strong, subtle vibration.

Look at the shivalingam. Concentrate on it. As you observe the shivalingam you will notice that a snake is coiled around the stone. You realize that it is the kundalini shakti.

Sitting there in front of the luminous shivalingam, feel the waves of energy and power that surround you. Be aware of the force within you. Experience that force within you.

As you sit there experience your body becoming part of the element earth. The body becomes like a rock, or a mound of clay, or like a speck of dust, or like the entire planet – whatever form of element earth you identify with. Experience the throbbing pulsation of energy within you.

You have become part of the element earth. Experience the stability. Experience the solidity. Experience the firmness of the element earth.

By becoming one with the element of earth, observe the state of consciousness at that level.

What is the state of consciousness at that level? The consciousness in the tamasic state, totally fixed in the experience of matter. Any effort to create a change in consciousness will be

impossible. Just experience the consciousness totally engrossed in matter.

Now, see yourself get up in the cave and again you walk towards the opening of the tunnel. The red glow of the shivalingam is left behind you. You move up along the tunnel until you come back to the opening in chidakasha.

In the space of chidakasha, begin to experience the lightness of the body, lightness in the energy structure, lightness in the consciousness.

Breathe in deeply and chant Om three times. With each chanting of Om intensify the awareness. Awareness of internal lightness. Awareness of internal harmony. Awareness of the body vibrating with the vibrations of Om. Breathe in. Om Om Om . . .”



Sankalpa

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

As individual beings we can have aspirations for peace, prosperity and wellbeing, but yoga has its own sankalpas or directions in which we are able to direct our energies and forces to experience them. The first resolve, the first sankalpa, in your life should be the Shanti Path, which we chant every day in the ashram. They represent the sankalpa and the aim of yoga.

Asato maa sadgamaya

Lead me from untruth to truth.

Tamaso maa jyotirgamaya

Lead me from darkness to light.

Mrityor maa amritamgamaya

Lead me from mortality to immortality.

Sarveshaam swastir bhavatu

May the goodness spread in all directions.

Sarveshaam shantir bhavatu

Let peace spread everywhere.

Sarveshaam poornam bhavatu

Let there be wholeness, completeness, fulfilment everywhere.

Sarveshaam mangalam bhavatu

Let there be auspiciousness everywhere.

Lokah samastah sukhino bhavantu

Let there be pleasantness in all dimensions of existence.

Aum Shanti, Shanti, Shanti

Aum Peace, Peace, Peace.

The first three mantras mean 'Take us from unreal to real, from darkness to light, from mortality, change, destruction and death, to the transformation of stability, continuity and eternity. *Asato maa sadgamaya* represents the desire to walk towards truth, from falseness. Make every effort to walk the path of truth and

you will live this first sankalpa. The second sankalpa *Tamaso maa jyotirgamaya*, 'Lead me from darkness to light' is an affirmation you make to yourself for your development. *Mrityor maa amritam gamaya*, 'Lead me from immortality to mortality' is the third affirmation to recognize the true nature of life, which is immortal. These three sankalpas are personal. They are the aims yoga sets for us to discover in life. Once we attain these aims which



bring harmony, equilibrium and balance in our life, then personal aims are transformed, they reach out and touch each and every one in the world.

The next five sankalpas are universal, for the world. Thus the social goals of yoga are *swasti*, an abundance of goodness,

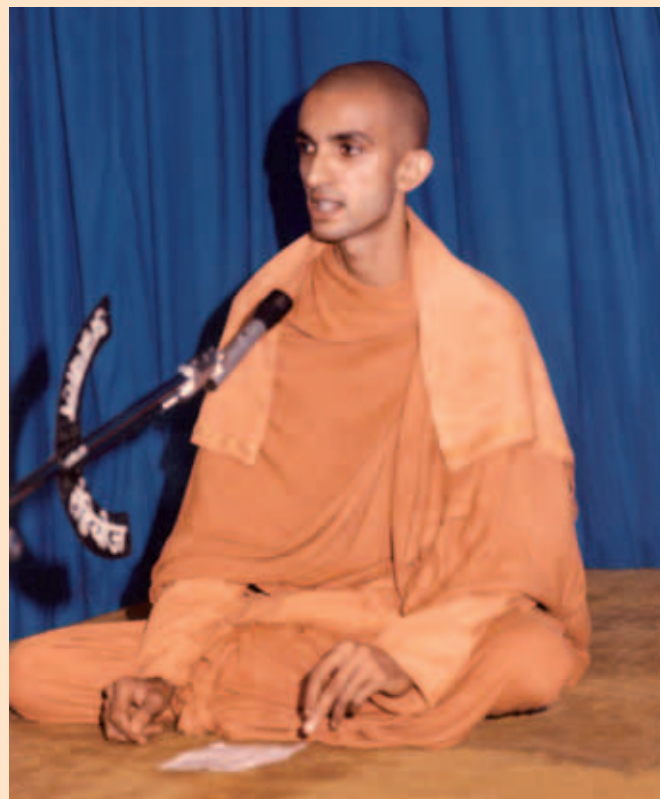
shanti, an abundance of peace, *poornam*, wholeness of life, *mangalam*, a conducive, auspicious environment everywhere, and *sukhino bhavantu*, a happy, joyous and harmonious life for all. To experience these sankalpas, however, you have to first experience the goodness, peace, wholeness, auspiciousness and pleasantness in your own life. A candle burns itself to bring light in darkness. In the same manner, when you create the sankalpa of wellness for the entire world by saying *Sarvesham swastirbhavatu*, you have to live that sankalpa in your life, first. When you say *Sarvesham shantirbhavatu*, let there be peace everywhere, you have to live this peace in your life, first. When you say *Sarvesham mangalam bhavatu*, let there be auspiciousness everywhere, you must make your own life an auspicious experience. When you say *Sarvesham poornam bhavatu*, let there be wholeness everywhere, you should experience that wholeness in you. It is possible to experience and attain these sankalpas when you undergo a process of yogic sadhana, through which you begin to live what you say.

Sankalpa or positive affirmation in yoga has two purposes. The first is to remove the conditioning of the mind, which makes us think and behave in a particular way, and to modify and balance our nature. The second purpose is to provide a positive aim and direction in life. In the beginning, a sankalpa may be used to overcome personality defects, such as smoking or undesirable habits. But sankalpa is not just a wish, it is a conviction. It is faith in oneself, faith that one can do it. A sankalpa cannot be, 'I wish it was like that/ or 'I wish to become that.' That is wishful thinking. Sankalpa is the conviction that 'I will become that.' Sankalpa is trust and faith in oneself, in one's own strength and courage: 'I have that, therefore, I can become that.'

Sankalpa is a process of training the mind to develop will and clarity of thought. Through sankalpa we learn how to train the mind so that the will becomes alive. We lack willpower because we are undisciplined inside. Often we are frustrated because we

are unable to extract ourselves from a situation dominating our mental behaviour. It is possible to wake up maybe for a week or a month at four o'clock in the morning but we are unable to continue doing that for a whole lifetime, because the motivation and drive goes away.

If the sankalpa maintains the motivation and drive, then lethargy will not set in. It is not necessary to have a very big



sankalpa at the beginning. Start with something small, changing the habits, changing the limitations that inhibit your growth. Try to understand yourself, observe yourself, find the blocks, and overcome one thing at a time. Don't have an abstract idea or an unattainable concept without prior training. For example, when

I was young I used to sleep very deeply and later on it became a problem. So I told myself that every morning I'd wake up at four, and I did that for one day. The second day it was five, the third day six, the fourth day seven. So I tried to discover my natural pattern. If I went to sleep at nine o'clock, I found that I would wake up normally without an alarm clock around six am, after nine hours of sleep. Then I set the alarm for five to six for one week, at ten to six the next week, at a quarter to six the third week and at twenty to six the fourth week. By decreasing five minutes each week, my mind became used to the training, and when it came to four o'clock, it had become a habit. This is the training of sankalpa.

We have to begin the process of recognizing our sankalpa. Our ambition is part of our sankalpa. The sankalpa made in yoga nidra is also a desire, but it is aimed at improving the self, not binding the self further. Through this sankalpa, we are changing the nature of tamas into rajas, and directing the nature of rajas into sattwa. One must be aware of the sankalpa made during the practice of yoga nidra. It is focusing the will to attain something. If people smoke, they can make the sankalpa, 'The need to smoke cigarettes is leaving me.' The desire to leave the smoking is a sankalpa.

Sankalpa can be seen in two ways. In external sankalpas, all our motivation is focused on attaining something, experiencing satisfaction and fulfilment. The same desire, the same force which takes us inwards to experience inner harmony is another form of sankalpa. Sankalpa is not only thinking you will become that, but also striving to become that. It is a positive affirmation which you make again and again to yourself in a heightened state of sensitivity and receptivity such as during yoga nidra, the practices of pratyahara or dharana. Sankalpa is not making a wish every New Year's Day. It is taking a step forward, and then stepping back has no meaning. Sankalpa is a step, not a thought, and when you take that step to fulfil the sankalpa, to fine-tune your life, remember that the more positive, optimistic and

sattwic you are, the more strength you will gain and the further you will go.

Sankalpa is a power, a force. Whatever you think is projected into the environment. Just as there are radio waves and other invisible frequencies in the environment, which can be captured with the right instruments, thoughts and desires also have a frequency. Negativity and positivity, pessimism and optimism,



have a frequency. What you express leaves an impression on the channel in the mind, and waves are transmitted. If there is intensity behind a sankalpa then the imprint on the mind will be stronger and you will be able to access that channel more frequently and easily. ॐ



January

Swami Niranjan gave satsangs at the Dhanbad ashram and then inaugurated the Ramayana Sammelan in Kalyanpur, the Blind Relief Camp and the annual function at Saraswati Shishu Mandir in Munger.

Swami Nischalananda gave lectures at the Aurobindo ashram, New Delhi.

February

Sri Swamiji visited England, giving lectures and satsangs in London and other parts of the country. Swami Amritananda gave lectures at Begusarai Refinery township.

March

Swami Kriyananda from BSY conducted a yoga shivir in Gorakhpur.

Swami Gorakhnath and Dr Swami Karmananda conducted a yoga health seminar at Smriti Bhavan, Gondia.

April

Sri Swamiji conducted bhoomi pooja in Satna for the yoga ashram.

Dr Swami Shankardevananda and Gurukripa from BSY gave a yoga program at Barauni Refinery Officer's Club.

May-June

Swami Amritananda gave lectures and satsangs in Kashmir.

June-July

Sri Swamiji travelled to Greece and then to Belgium. On his return to India he gave satsangs in Mumbai.

July

Guru Poornima celebrations were held at Ganga Darshan with kirtan, Guru Paduka Poojan and havan in the morning, and kirtan in the evening, followed by lectures by Swami Amritananda and Swami Niranjan.

A yoga seminar at Patliputra Yoga Sansthan was conducted by Swamis Gorakhnath and Kriyananda.

August-October

A seminar at Sri Narayana Seva Sadan, Patna, was conducted by Swami Shankaracharya from BSY. He then held a seminar at the MECON-SAIL Sports Club.

September

A yoga training course was conducted by Swami Kriyananda at the Yogic Science Library, Begusarai.

October

Sri Swamiji gave talks and lectures organized by TISCO in Jamshedpur and later held discussions and satsang in Mumbai.



November

A group of devotees from England arrived with Swami Pragyamurti for a special Kriya Yoga course.

December

Swami Niranjan inaugurated the Yoga Festival at Sri Krishna Vigyan Kendra, Patna, and conducted the opening function of the Ramayana Sammelan in Indarukh, Jamalpur.

A group of devotees from Italy arrived with Swami Anandananda for the Kriya Yoga course in Italian.

Swami Gorakhnath and Swami Kriyananda conducted a yoga program in Madhusudangarh.



It was that time of the year when acharyas and students from around the world gather at Ganga Darshan, and satsang on the lawns becomes a regular feature. The afternoon past, someone had asked a profoundly complicated and convoluted question. Swami Niranjan's eyes twinkled as he let the questioner carry on. "Uh-oh, here we go," I thought to myself. He answered by telling the shortest joke! Swamiji has never allowed spirituality to become dry pontification and every interaction with him is a reminder that we need not take ourselves too seriously.

"Was Swamiji always so full of fun?" asked my entranced friend.

As I wondered how to explain the quality of joy around the bright Swan, we spotted Swami Muktidharma and Rishi Vivekananda sitting on the palm tree benches in the Main Building courtyard where the tiles form the symbol of ajna chakra, the emblem of BSY. "They have known Swamiji since he was a child. Let's go and test their memory," I said.

So, Mukti, tell us about your first encounters with Swami Niranjan.

A friend, an inspiration

"It was the beginning of 1972 and at the age of 24, I had left university after a disagreement with my psychology teacher. I knew there was more to life than Freud, so I started searching for something deeper and more solid to base my life upon.

This incident brought me to one of the most beautiful and significant encounters of my life. I knocked at the doors of the Satyananda Yoga Ashram in Bogota, Colombia. A boy, no more than 12, wrapped in guru clothes opened the door and invited me to enter. From the moment we met, Swami Niranjan's face was so familiar. He welcomed me and allowed me to stay in the ashram as if I were an old friend.

From the very beginning Swami Niranjan made it clear that he was not my guru, but my guru brother. He told me that our

guru would come and in 1975 Sri Swamiji came to Colombia for the World Yoga Convention. In an instant, life-changing flash, I met my guru.

In the meantime, Swami Niranjan attracted me with his deep and calm nature. I felt an immediate comfort and closeness, as if he was my very best friend in the most profound sense. He captured me with his depth and the equally present dynamic, naughty and playful nature.

On the very first day that we met, Swami Niranjan hid a small, explosive green chilli inside my rice during lunch, causing me to see dancing stars in the middle of the day. From that day onwards, we played together, swimming in rivers, playing soccer, boxing, and riding horses and motorbikes.





During yoga programs, Swamiji expressed an infinite knowledge and naughty child both. I remember during yoga nidra sessions, he would tell the ladies to count the breath backwards from 108 to 1. This gave us just enough time to 'borrow' the car keys from their purses, drive around a few blocks and come back to continue with the yoga nidra session, with none the wiser!

During these myriad experiences with Swami Niranjana, the immaculate one, he always remained balanced, stable and with a twinkle in his eye.

Swamiji left Colombia for the USA at about the age of 16 and we met again years later in 1983 at the Munger ashram. I was the kitchen in-charge at that time and one morning saw this new swami arrive at the kitchen for breakfast. Swamiji had returned to Munger in the middle of the night after many years away. He told me, 'We found each other again.' Nothing had changed, only the size of our bodies and the age on the face, but the connection was intact.

Despite all the playfulness and the closeness that I felt with Swamiji throughout the years, there was always something so

deep that I could never touch it. Even now, when I look into his eyes, I cannot reach this mystery.

I always had the sense that Swami Niranjana would be the one to succeed Sri Swamiji and carry forward the next generation. He has poured on me tremendous inspiration for my sannyasa life and inspired the love and connection to our guru. I have been observing the relationship between him and Sri Swamiji for a very long time and he inspires me with his total focus, attentiveness and surrender.

One of the lessons that I have learned by being with Swamiji is that we do not need to run away from life to find God; we can discover God in this very moment when we embrace life fully with awareness.

The sannyasins of today are not meant for caves and renunciation, but for a path of conscious participation in the activities of life. Swami Niranjana has demonstrated total dedication by carrying forward the institutions and mandates that Sri Swamiji gave to him. He has served for the benefit of all of us and injected new blood in the work of our guru.

I am eternally grateful to life for bringing me to such an incredible brother and friend who will keep inspiring my life forever. What an extraordinary friendship life has given to me to keep me moving forward! I am so honoured that this connection with Swami Niranjana is still alive and continues to play a very important role in my heart. The memories of a life together and the motivating example he sets, awakens in me a sense of responsibility and dedication for our guru's mission, and I am driven forward in the path of growth and transformation.

Swami Niranjana has been the one to show me the path to my guru, my best friend and my great teacher. I know that Sri Swamiji has extended himself into a second body that is called Swami Niranjana, and that when I experience Swamiji it is the extension of my guru. For me Swamiji is the gift that my guru has given to me to continue reinforcing the inspiration that holds my life together."

Rishi Vivekananda, you also met Swami Niranjan for the first time in Colombia. How do you remember those early days?"

The kind trickster

"It has been one of the greatest blessings of my life to have had a warm friendship with Swami Niranjan for almost 35 years. I first heard about him some years before I met him; one of the swamis from BSY was talking about life in the ashram at Munger. He said, 'A lot of trickery goes on in that place. Some of the people are always playing tricks on you, such as hiding your things, setting your alarm clock for the wrong time. But the greatest trickster of all is a young boy named Niranjan. If ever you are over there, be careful when you try to open a door, a bucket full of water is likely to fall all over you. If it does you can be sure Niranjan was behind it.' He added, 'But his tricks are never hurtful.'

I first met Swami Niranjan in 1975 when Rishi Hridayananda (then Sita) and I were in Colombia to participate in the World Yoga Convention conducted by Sri Swamiji. He was 15 years old then, tall and lean, and full of the fun of life. As we were chatting one day, he said, 'You get very good ice-creams here in Bogota. Would you like one, I will get one for each of you.' We thought, 'He's a kind young man.' He led us out of the ashram. Halfway down the street he ran ahead of us and disappeared around the corner. When we finally turned the corner, there he was with three super-size ice-creams. He sweetly handed one to each of us, then pointed to the ice-cream shop and said 'You pay that man in there.' We thought, 'He's not just kind, he's smart too!'

The next time we were together was the following year when he had come to stay in Australia, in time for the World Convention. Soon after the convention, Hriday and our youngest son Prasadana went to live in India and left me behind alone. Swami Niranjan came to stay and was soon joined by Swami Shankardevananda; we laughed the whole time. One thing I especially remember were the occasions when the three of us got together and played music, sometimes kirtans but often

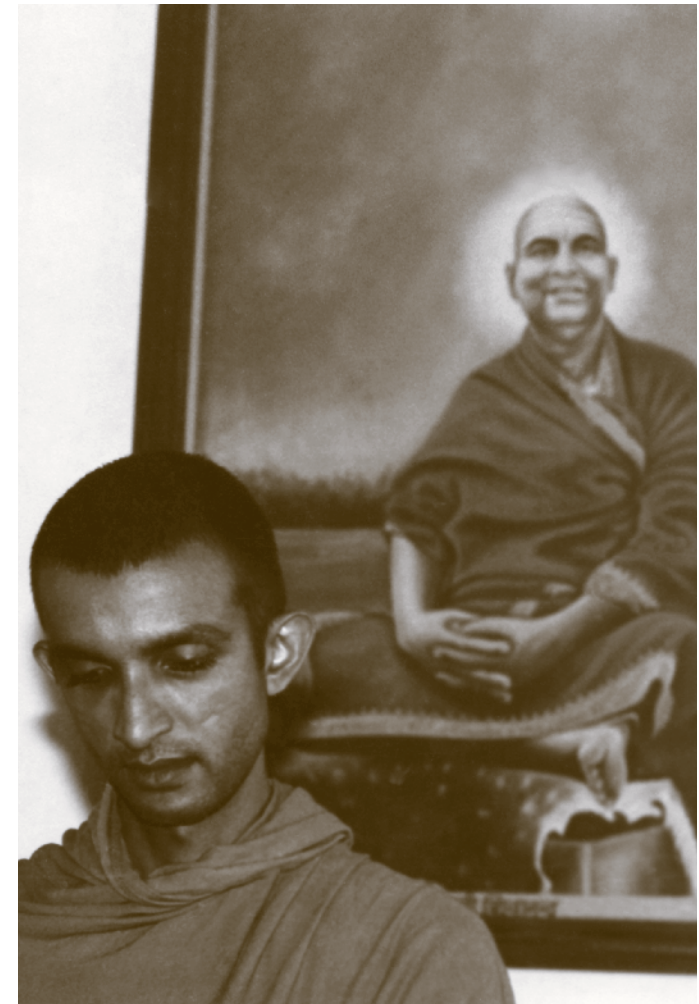
jazz, rock and roll and boogie woogie, with Shankardev playing guitar, me on the piano and Swami Niranjan playing the drum on a saucepan. He really got amazing syncopated rhythm out of that old kitchen pot.

In July 1977 Sri Swamiji came to Australia for Guru Poornima. When he returned to India, Swami Niranjan and I went with him. We stayed in the Miramar Hotel in Hong Kong on the way, and the room had all kinds of gadgets. There seemed to be buttons for everything and Swami Niranjan pressed all of them over and over. The curtains were going backwards and forwards, the AC was going on and off. He loved gadgets.

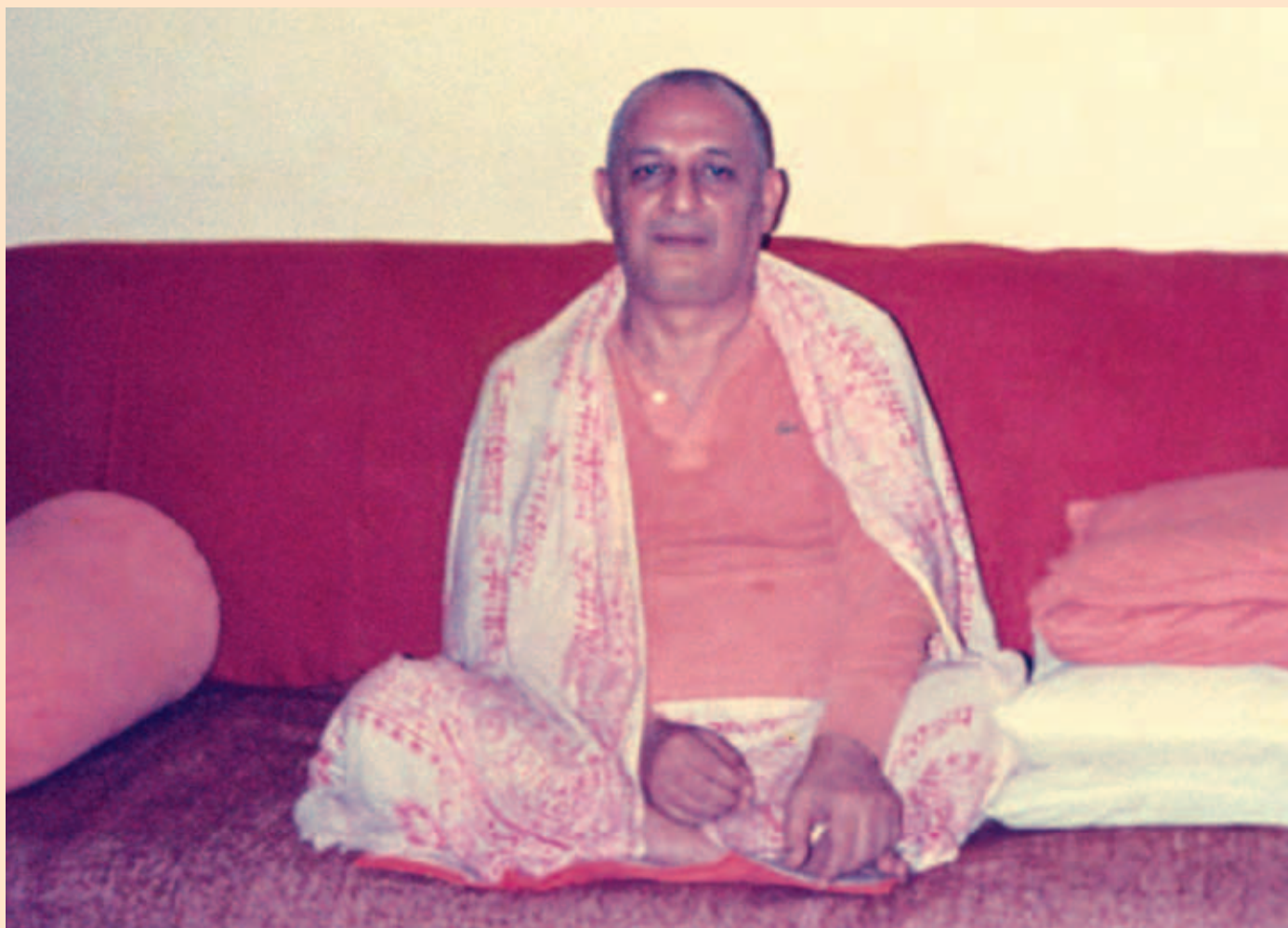
A few years later when I was going to the USA, to my surprise and joy I discovered that Swami Niranjan had gone there just months before and had set up a yoga centre in an apartment in San Jose. So began our American adventure, a period of over two years when we were touring the USA. As we went down the highway in our little blue car we sang bhajans, songs, kirtans, but our favourite was Willie Nelson's 'On the Road Again', which we sang loudly and enthusiastically. It was always fun with him, but I could also clearly see his fine qualities in so many areas.

The highlight of that time was when the two of us toured the whole country setting up the lecture tour that Sri Swamiji went on in 1982. I was impressed by his organizing ability and the way he could get virtually anyone to do virtually anything with his kindness. We continued touring after that, and then in 1983 he had to leave for India to take over the Presidency of Bihar School of Yoga. It was a sad day for me, though I realized he was going there to give to others what he gained from his guru. He certainly exemplifies the great benefits of growing up in the gurukul under the beneficence of Sri Swamiji.

During the last 15 years I have frequently been with Swamiji in Australia, India, Europe and other parts of the world on seminars and various trips. Those occasions have always been the highlight of the year. His kindness warms every heart; his



brilliant lecturing gives answers to the most profound questions of life; though most of all he is such fun to be with. Everywhere he goes there is laughter, jokes and happiness. One little motto of his is 'live, love and laugh', and he is certainly a living example of that. It is a privilege, honour and blessing to know him. If I was asked to use just a few words to describe Swami Niranjan, they would 'gentleness, loving kindness, immense strength, humour, balance, competence; an immaculate disciple of an immaculate guru.'"



Our hearts were warmed by these beautiful memories. As we sat watching the students and disciples from around the world, and words in English, Italian, French, Greek, German and Spanish floated around, Ganga Darshan resembled an international university with satsangs and classes conducted in all these languages. I remembered how more and more disciples gathered.

In 1985, for the third year in succession, Sri Swamiji continued to travel overseas, mainly in Europe, while Swami

Niranjan remained in India, travelling now throughout Bihar. He began to set up programs for Sivananda Math and the Yoga Research Foundation, and on an international level, started working with the teachers who brought groups of students to BSY, forming the basis of working relationships which have endured for many years. Many teachers, such as Swami Pragyamurti, Swami Sivamurti and Swami Anandananda made annual visits from this time with groups of students prepared for advanced yoga courses.

Swami Shaktidhara has been coming here from Italy for years. "She may say very little, but her commitment runs deep," I said as I glimpsed her heading our way. "Swami Shaktidhara, what qualities come to your mind when you think of Swami Niranjan?"

Love and devotion

"These are the first words that appear in my awareness when I think of Swami Niranjan. His looks, the expression of his face, what he says, what he communicates beyond words, his smile, the light and transparency that his eyes emanate, are all permeated by and vibrate with love and devotion.

When I see him it is as though no problems exist any more. My mind becomes relaxed, I feel I don't have to worry any more for he will fix everything. To meet his smiling look is an opportunity to free the mind from unnecessary thoughts and gives a positive perspective for the day. Often, during difficult times, it is helpful to keep the awareness absorbed in him, for it gives a basis to work from.

His way of moving, of speaking, the tone of his voice, his attitude towards all of us and the many activities of the day, makes me think of the totality of his love and devotion towards Sri Swamiji. He moves out of total understanding and awareness of his mission and the importance it will have for future generations.

It is the nicest thing to come here and be able to have him so near, to play and joke with him with such simplicity, just like children, to perceive his joy in life and to laugh with him, feeling him partly as a father, partly as a brother, partly as a friend. The perception I have is of him embodying ancient wisdom, as though he is a being who does not belong to this planet, and maybe this is why he can have such a humorous vision of life.

Personally I consider myself fortunate to have had the opportunity in my life to meet two such spiritual beings as Sri Swamiji and Swamiji. It is my wish to keep their love and devotion as a model, so that I can constantly follow their direction on this journey to light."

Hatha Yoga

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Yoga is a science of life and living. That is how we have to understand yoga today – not as a spiritual practice, but as a science of life. Our paramguru Swami Sivananda always used to say that human beings have three main qualities: intellect, emotion and the ability to perform action. If we are able to develop the potential of these three, then no matter what field of life we are involved in, we will gain peace and prosperity. It was with this idea that the Sivananda tradition propagated yoga – for the integrated development of human character, mind and personality. And if we look at the system and structure of yoga, we discover that it is also the aim of yoga.

Yoga is a structured science with specific aims and practices, and all these create a definite transformation in the personality, the body, mind and emotions. The betterment of these leads us to a greater appreciation of and participation in life, and enhanced creativity. Each limb of yoga takes us to a destination, each has a specific direction and all the limbs complement each other. One form of yoga by itself is not complete, but it is the combination of all the limbs that makes yoga a complete system.

In our tradition, Swami Sivananda used to speak of yoga in the traditional way. The second generation, Swami Satyananda, Swami Vishnudevananda, Swami Satchidananda and Swami Venkatesananda, spoke about asanas and pranayamas in a scientific way. With the third generation, I hope to inspire people to speak of yoga in a classical way, which is a different approach and understanding of yoga in relation to the total human nature. Classical yoga is neither the traditional nor the scientific approach, but combines both.

In the tradition, yoga is divided into two parts: *bahiranga* yoga and *antaranga* yoga. *Bahiranga* means external and *antaranga* means internal. *Bahiranga* yoga is the yoga to be practised



and *antaranga* yoga is the yoga to be lived. So *bahiranga* yoga refers to the practices we can perform to purify the physical body, which is the vehicle for experiencing life. It has been said, *Shariramadhyam khalu dharma sadhanam* – “The body is the vehicle by which one can perform and fulfil one’s duties, obligations and dharma.”

The yogis have always believed that the body is a vehicle by which one can experience the unknown. Therefore, attainment of physical balance and harmony is necessary before learning how to deal with the mind. The body has to be maintained in a state of optimum health. Optimum health does not mean having a disease-free body, because the body cannot be free from disease and illness. The seers realized this and stated that in creation

everything which is subject to birth goes through transformation: *janma*, birth, *vyadhi*, illness, *jara*, ageing, and *mrityu*, death. This is the natural law which cannot be changed. Optimum health is maintaining the harmony of the *pranas*, whatever the state of the body may be. Maintaining a balance of the *pranas* has become the foundation stone of yogic management principles.

People suffer from physical, mental and emotional illnesses, which manifest through the body. These are distorted conditions of ease. Ease, comfort, is the natural state of the body. When the natural state of balance is disturbed, it is known as disease, ‘disturbed ease’. Therefore, *bahiranga* yoga emphasizes optimum health of the body by maintaining harmony and avoiding situations which create disharmony.



We need to regulate our life in such a way, through exercises, breathing and other practices, that we have total physical harmony and are able to eradicate all the problems which influence the performance of our senses and body. And therefore, the purpose of hatha yoga is *sharira shuddhi*, purification, detoxification, regularization and harmonization of the body and its internal organs. This is how health is attained.

Health does not denote that our body is one hundred percent free from illness, but denotes that there is an awareness

of how to manage different problems as and when they come up in our life. Even the World Health Organisation (WHO) has defined health as physical, mental, spiritual, moral, emotional and social. So WHO has not defined health as the absence of disease from the body; it has defined it as regulated lifestyle, as harmony at all levels.

Maintaining harmony is known as *anushasana*. The first statement of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* is 'Atha yogah anushasanam'. Anushasan does not mean discipline. *Shasan* means 'to rule', 'to

control' or 'to guide'; *anu* means 'subtle'. According to Patanjali, *Atha yogah anushasanam* means having the ability to direct and channel the subtle activities and forces that are manifesting through this vehicle. The moment you become aware of this concept and begin to observe yourself and guide the movements of energy within with the idea of attaining balance, you begin yoga practice. This is a very important sutra, as it defines the entire theory and philosophy of yoga. You discover for yourself what anushasana can mean to you. As the concept develops, ultimately one's whole life becomes anushasana – the ability to govern life positively and creatively, to direct the energies and forces of life to uplift oneself.

The yogis said that to implement this concept, one has to begin to work with oneself, with what is tangible, visible, to be in touch with the body. How do we manage the imbalances of the body? How do we eliminate the accumulated toxins? How do we remove the pranic blockages?

In order to develop physiological balance and to eliminate imbalances, the yogis described the processes of hatha yoga. Hatha yoga is the doorway to yoga because it allows you to accept yourself, to move from this physical self into the subtle realms of your nature. Bahiranga yoga is external physical practice and sadhana. Hatha yoga is the gateway to bahiranga yoga. Asanas, pranayamas, mudras, bandhas and shatkarmas are the applied part of this sadhana. They are techniques to improve the physical system, to service this vehicle. If you drive a brand new car without having it serviced, the car will age faster and accidents will happen. But if you have the car serviced regularly, you ensure its optimum performance, and if something does go wrong, it can be rectified immediately. It is the same with the body.

People who have had regular servicing have youthful bodies, even in old age. At the age of eighty they are still full of vitality, dynamism and stamina. Their eyesight is good, their digestion

is good, the strength of their limbs is good and they can walk with an erect spine without having to use a walking stick. If you are regular in practising bahiranga yoga, even at the age of eighty you will be like twenty. We can see this in yogis who, although well advanced in age, follow a systematic routine and discipline.

Swami Satyananda, my guru, is eighty-six in years, but we cannot keep up with his routine and activities. He refuses to have helpers and does his own cleaning and washing. He is not a mahatma who sits down and has his disciples do his work. People who have seen him are witness to his vitality, dynamism and clarity. We can never match his stamina and health. That is the perfection of bahiranga yoga, external yogic sadhana.

The physical practices not only affect the physical structure, but also the pranic dimension, and harmony between the body and prana influences the mental dimension. The purpose of external yogic sadhana is not only to provide health or remove imbalances, but also to balance the physical energy with the mental energy. Hatha yoga has to be understood not as physical activity, not as performance of postures, but as the realignment of the physical and mental energies. It is attaining balance between the physical and mental pranic forces.

The word hatha is composed of the two mantras, 'ha' and 'tha'. *Ha* represents the solar force, the prana shakti or energy manifesting in and governing the body. *Tha* represents the lunar force governing the subtle mental expression, chitta shakti, which is the energy responsible for dynamism of the mind and the growth of consciousness. The aim of hatha yoga is to balance the physical and mental activity, to harmonize the physical movement of prana and the mental experience of prana.

This is further clarified by Patanjali when he is defining asana: *Sthiram sukham asanam (Yoga Sutras 2:46)*. Asana is that posture in which one is *sthira*, immobile, and *sukha*, comfortable, where the body is still and in a state of absolute ease. Stillness,



comfort and ease is the definition of asana. There are two kinds of asanas, dynamic and static. We have to move from a dynamic state of practice to a passive state of experience.

The dynamic asanas are to loosen up the body and joints, to eliminate stress and tension from the muscular and nervous systems. The static postures help to internalize the mind. The physical activity has to be internalized and quietened, and tranquillity developed. So Patanjali says that asana is that posture in which you are immobile, steady, firm, comfortable and at ease with yourself. If you interpret it from a psychological, emotional or spiritual perspective, Patanjali's statement indicates that harmony exists between body and

mind. So external sadhana leads to focusing of the physical and mental energies. At this point bahiranga yoga stops and antaranga yoga, inner yoga, begins.

The other practices of hatha yoga: pranayamas, mudras, bandhas and shatkarmas, are also classified into two groups. There are pranayamas which improve the performance and function of the respiratory system and regulate the breath at the outer level. At the inner level they awaken the pranas which move in the *nadis*, energy channels, and are connected with the psychic centres, *chakras*, in the system. Mudras and bandhas perform similar actions. The shatkarmas also represent balance between the physiological outer structure and the inner mental structure. Neti, dhauti and basti belong to the physical dimension; nauli, kapalbhati and trataka influence the chakras.

Remember that practising yoga without awareness of the chakras is only physical exercise. When you use the word yoga, you have to develop a holistic perception of your personality in which not only the physical body, but also the interaction between the physical energies and subtle energies has to be considered. This is a very subtle understanding of yoga that needs to be cultivated in order to derive the maximum benefit.

The holistic process is the merger of the mind with the body, the merger of prana shakti with the mind and body. It is the tuning of consciousness with the functions of the mind and body. The management of imbalances and diseases and the attainment of health and wellbeing is one aspect. But the real essence of bahiranga yoga lies in identifying the different functions of the energies in our system and applying the prana shakti for the fulfilment of the psychic and spiritual objectives that we have set for ourselves, so that we can perform higher stages of yoga with greater ease and comfort. This is the first step into yoga. We then move into antaranga or inner yoga, management of the mind or raja yoga. ॐ



January

Swami Niranjanananda conducted an extensive tour of Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Maharashtra, organized by devotees in Raigarh, Bhilai, Durg, Rajnandgaon, Raipur, Bolangir, Sambalpur, Gondia and Mumbai. Swamis Gorakhnath and Kriyananda conducted yoga programs in Jabalpur and Durg.

February

Sri Swamiji presided over the 5th National Yoga Convention in Amaravati, organized by the Brihan Maharashtra Parishad.

Swami Niranjan inaugurated a yoga function at Bharatiya Gyana Vidya Peeth, Bariarpur, and presided over a Ramayana Sammelan organized by Jamalpur railway workers.

Swami Gorakhnath conducted a yoga therapy course in Kanpur.

Swami Kriyananda conducted a yoga program in Gorakhpur.

Swami Shankaracharya from BSY conducted yoga programs in Dalsingasarai and Gwalior.

March

Sri Swamiji graced a rally at Gandhi Maidan, Patna, organized by the Akhil Bharatiya Shishu Sangam for thousands of children from the eastern states.

May-June

The Bhagavad Gita chanting week for children was conducted by Swamis Gorakhnath and Satyasangananda.

Swami Niranjan conducted yoga therapy and prana vidya classes and gave satsang in Disergarh, Mumbai, Lonavala and Bhuj, during May and June.

July

A three-day sadhana shivir preceded the Guru Poonima celebrations at Ganga Darshan under Sri Swamiji's guidance,

giving a specific sadhana for devotees to integrate into their lives. Thousands flocked to see Sri Swamiji after his prolonged absences from the ashram. Chanting of the Bhagavad Gita and Upanishads was held in the new hall on the second floor of the Main Building.

August

Swami Vajrapani from BSY conducted a yoga seminar at the Indian Oil Corporation in Assam.

September

Swami Niranjan conducted seminars organized by the Yoga Mitra Mandals in Bhuj and Baroda.

November

Swami Niranjan presided over the National Yoga Convention in Raipur, organized by Satyadarshan Yogashram.





A small group of us again gathered on a Sunday afternoon and began discussing the developments in the ashram over the years. Searching my memory, I recalled, “In 1986, the ground floor of the Main Building was brought into use, and on the auspicious occasion of Basant Panchami, all the offices were transferred here while construction work continued on the upper storeys.

“Sri Swamiji was in seclusion, as he rested from his travels and immersed himself in sadhana. However, thousands of devotees flocked to see him on Guru Poornima when he conducted a special sadhana shivir for three days. Later, he began a new wave of teaching which continued for two years. During this time Sri Swamiji and Swami Niranjan personally conducted all classes, first in the kutir and then on the sixth floor of the Main Building. The resident sannyasins were inspired to incorporate vedic chants in their daily sadhana and the nada yoga and Saundarya Lahari sadhanas were established.”

“In fact, it were these classes that inspired Swami Satsangi to continue her study of Saundarya Lahari, culminating in her brilliant commentary on Adi Shankaracharya’s work,” added a sannyasin who had been walking around with a copy of the book.

“Yes,” I continued. “There was another development at this time. Towards the end of 1985 and early 1986 a wave of BSY sannyasins had to leave India for their native lands, but it proved to be a revitalizing force. Swami Nishchalananda and Swami Atmapoornananda travelled to Europe and ploughed their energy into establishing the Yoga Centre in Wales. In Australia, Dr Swami Karmananda and Swami Muktibodhananda began the Yoga Therapy Centre in Melbourne. Swami Mahatmananda, Dr Swami Shankardevananda and Swami Shankaracharya worked from the Avalon Yoga Therapy Centre in Sydney, supplementing the dedicated teaching being conducted by swamis from the Mangrove Mountain and other centres.

Back in India, with Sri Swamiji in residence, Swami Niranjan had the opportunity to begin touring India more actively,

presiding over conventions, visiting and promoting the practice of yoga through lectures, workshops and classes. People had the opportunity to meet him again after his 11-year absence overseas. And his brilliance as a teacher shone.”

“How does he do it?” asked a pair of mesmerized eyes next to me.

The evening before Swamiji had given us a superb talk on raja yoga. As I pondered over how indeed, we were informed there was urgent requirement of karma yogis at the kitchen for a special meal. So, walking down the steps to prepare dough for pizza, I answered, “It is because he lives what he teaches. “Whether it is the subtle movement of the pranas or the nuance of a sutra, he goes right into its heart and then applies it in



his life. Therefore when he speaks about it, it appears real. It reaches into the part of us that can apply it, too.”

Later, I spotted Swami Sivamurti, acharya of the Greek Satyananda Yoga ashram, and sought to confirm my hypothesis. This is what she had to say.

As he speaks, so he lives

“Like most spiritual masters, Swamiji is a great storyteller. He weaves threads of entertaining narrative with threads of wisdom. He knows, as do all effective speakers, that the most lasting and sure way for people to remember truths is through either personal experience or listening to parables and tales.

One of his stories is his tale of the two electrical sockets. Each socket was in a wall and each had three holes in it to connect with a plug. The first socket represents the material dimension of our world and the selfish identification with life. When we plug into this socket we plug into the three gunas or energy currents of tamas (negative current), rajas (positive current) and sattwa (neutral current). Attachment to this socket will only bring fleeting pleasure and satisfaction. As we focus our identification, desires and needs on the material dimension we are never fully satisfied and long for more; we become addicted to its illusive charms. This creates the disappointment, frustration and suffering of maya.

The spiritual socket has similar holes for the three electrical currents. However, the gunas in this socket are of a subtler and more transcendental nature. They are the three gunas of the spiritual dimension. Plugging into this socket provides us with a different attitude of the world and our place in it. The spiritual energies transform our self-fixated material attitude. The guna currents in this socket enable us to begin practising the golden rule of all spiritual teachings. This rule is expressed in Christianity as caring for our neighbour as we would care for ourselves, and doing to others only what we would like them to do to us. It is to do with empathy; with striving to see the world from another’s viewpoint, and beginning to live to relieve the suffering of humanity in our particular circumstances as well as universally.



Swamiji says that a person plugged into the spiritual socket is like a candle which sheds light while burning itself out for others. The light emitted both recharges and nourishes the giver and receiver. We have living examples of this precept to witness and emulate in Swami Satyananda and Swami Sivananda, as well as Swamiji himself. All three live or lived in the world as examples of our paramguru's maxim: 'Serve, love, give, purify, do good, be good, meditate, realize'.

Due to his spiritual connection, Swamiji is able to project his spirit and energies outward to others in the state that Sri Swamiji describes as 'atmabhava'. This is the spiritual state where you see yourself in other people. This only occurs when a person's spirit is being projected outwards to others. It is seeing your spirit in everyone. Swamiji says that, in atmabhava, when you see a person suffering, you realize that it is God who is suffering; when you see a person hungry or thirsty, then it is God who hungers and thirsts in that person.

One is able to see divinity in the human and in the material. Without atmabhava we remain locked in our focus on ourselves, but with atmabhava this selfishness is transformed into the selflessness of the spiritual socket.

Another favourite story of Swamiji that illustrates this teaching is the tale of the man whose shadow was blessed by God. As he journeyed through life his shadow fell upon others who were instantly healed of infirmities and uplifted to a more joyous and blessed experience of life. This saint was so in love and united with the divine, that he was oblivious of the effect his shadow had.

Swamiji also narrates the tale of the axe that was used to cut down a sandalwood tree. The sandalwood, although under attack and suffering great pain, freely and selflessly gave its perfume of beauty and virtue to the axe, until the final felling of its trunk.

It is not just that Swamiji weaves these tales into fragrant yet powerfully effective memories that remain in our minds and hearts; it is that he actually lives the moral of these tales. It is the living tale of his life, woven with different shades of changing circumstances and situations, that inspires us to emulate his example, and strive ourselves to connect, as much as we can, to the same socket of atmabhava.

In the twelfth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna asks Lord Krishna how to recognize perfected individuals. Krishna replies (13-20):

'He who hates no creature, who is friendly and compassionate to all, who is free from attachment and egoism, balanced in pleasure and pain, and forgiving. Ever content, steady in meditation, self-controlled, possessed of firm conviction, with the mind and intellect dedicated to Me, My devotee, is dear to Me. He by whom the world is not agitated and who cannot be agitated by the world, and who is freed from joy, envy, fear and anxiety – he is dear to Me. He who is free from wants, pure, expert, unconcerned, and untroubled, renouncing all undertakings or commencements – he who is (thus) devoted to Me, is dear to Me. He who neither



rejoices, nor hates, nor grieves, nor desires, renouncing good and evil, and who is full of devotion, is dear to Me. He who is the same to foe and friend, and also in honour and dishonour, who is the same in cold and heat and in pleasure and pain, who is free from attachment. He to whom censure and praise are equal, who is silent, content with anything, homeless, of a steady mind, and full of devotion – that man is dear to Me. They verily who follow this immortal dharma (law or doctrine) as described above, endowed with faith,

regarding Me as their supreme goal, they, the devotees, are exceedingly dear to Me.'

This is a description of a person connected to the socket of atmabhava; this is a description of Swamiji. He is our role model and our hero. Without such worthy heroes and role models in life we stumble and fall. We remain fixated on the mutable gunas of the material socket. We need living examples to reach out to, to hang on to, and to emulate. Such a human being is Swamiji. If the ancient Greek master, Diogenes, was walking our world today in his wine barrel, and as was said refusing to blow out his candle till he met a 'real human being', then he would blow it out instantly, without any hesitation, once he met Swamiji.

When Swamiji was only eighteen he visited Greece. A group of young people were walking with him and myself in Athens. At some point I was aware that Swamiji was no longer beside me. So I turned around to see where he was and saw him right at the back of the group. He was walking with an elderly student and entertaining him so that he did not feel uncomfortable among so many young people. This is the humanity of Swamiji, and this is the strength of atmabhava – the spiritual socket."

Swami Anandakumar, perceived a similar effect that Swamiji can effortlessly cast.

Beyond expectation

"I have only ever met one person who shows a complete understanding, and mastery of this world of duality, who, in a nutshell, by virtue of example, constantly reveals the art of life, the awareness of the moment, the measured step, the unhurried yet dynamic energy, the easy movement from childlike playfulness to full authority (and back again). And a sense of humour that startles you into laughing at yourself. And yet, what really captures the heart, in a cynical world, is the readiness in the face of problems or adversity, to look within and look for room for improvement there first, before expecting



change in others around him, no matter how much that might be warranted.

In Australia, I had heard of Swami Niranjan for a long time, without knowing what 'Swami Niranjan' was. I had no real concepts concerning him, or preconditioning, but in the months before coming to Munger to attend the Sannyasa Training Course, I built up in my mind an idea of what I would like Swami Niranjan to be. Rarely in life does it happen that the reality exceeds and transcends the expectation, yet somehow it happened."

Raja Yoga

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

What makes one a terrorist and what makes one a good person? It is the mind. The mind can be a saint and the mind can be a sinner, and it is that mind which has to be dealt with to evolve in life. Yoga says that if you are able to improve the quality of your mind then you will succeed in everything that you do, whether in professional, personal or spiritual life. Dealing with the mind and training oneself to manage the mind has been the subject matter of raja yoga.

Each limb of yoga takes you towards the particular direction that it has decided for itself; hatha yoga takes you towards balance of the two forces of prana shakti and chitta shakti, while raja yoga takes you towards the mind and gives you the ability to manage the dissipated nature of the mind in a better way. Raja yoga is a very interesting branch of yoga because in this the fine-tuning of human nature and personality takes place.

The first three sutras of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* define the process of yoga. The first is: *Atha yogah anushasanam* – "Yoga is to be understood as a form of discipline." The second is: *Yogah chitta vritti nirodhah* – "Yoga is a system of mind management, of managing the modifications of mind." The third is: *Tada drashtah swarupe avasthanam* – "Once the mind is managed and guided, a person becomes the seer, the observer, and that observer establishes himself in his own true nature." These three sutras are the most relevant ones to understand in today's context.

In our early life, the education we are provided with helps us to become more aggressive and competitive. It gives us the skills, concepts and ideas to act at the outer material level, to know how to attain the things we desire, how to acquire money, have an affluent society and be part of it, how to excel in our

profession or field of expertise. The entire education is directed towards building a better 'outer me', but how to become a better 'inner me' is not part of the education policy.

The spiritual and yogic traditions fill this gap. In yoga the concept of discipline is governing the subtle processes of one's personality. Within you have positive and negative qualities, and what is within has to be governed in the right manner so that it does not become a barrier or a restrictive factor, but instead



helps to create a condition in which one can be optimally creative. Thus, governing the subtle personality is yoga, according to the first sutra. The entrance to the subtle personality is through the mind. The mind is not a biological function; it is not a specific function of the brain. The mind is an energy responsible for action and reaction, for the implementation of ideas. It is composed of many different items: thoughts, desires, ambitions, perceptions, samskaras and karmas.

Patanjali says that by restraining the *chanchal vrittis*, highly excited vrittis, you can awaken the strength and the shakti within the mind and use that power to discover your inner *swabhava*, nature. The first step is to perfect the discipline and learning called yoga. The outcome of this is that you are able to contain the mental modifications. And the outcome of having contained the destructive and dissipated mental vrittis is that you begin to realize your true nature. This true nature is not the conditioned nature that you are living at present. It is the unconditional nature of existence, it is sattvic existence. This is the yogic journey of raja yoga.

The mind is always fluctuating. Sometimes we are elated, sometimes depressed. Sometimes we are looking forward twenty years in the future, and sometimes looking back ten years in the past. It is this fluctuation of mind which becomes the cause of distress in life. If you can maintain a continuous flow of the mind, free from fluctuations, then you attain a yogic mind. Therefore, Patanjali said, use yoga to control the modifications of mind. The way to achieve this is through cultivation of a special quality of observation, which is known as *drashta*. You become a witness of everything that happens. How to cultivate this observer attitude, the drashta component, is defined in the last four stages of Patanjali yoga: pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi.

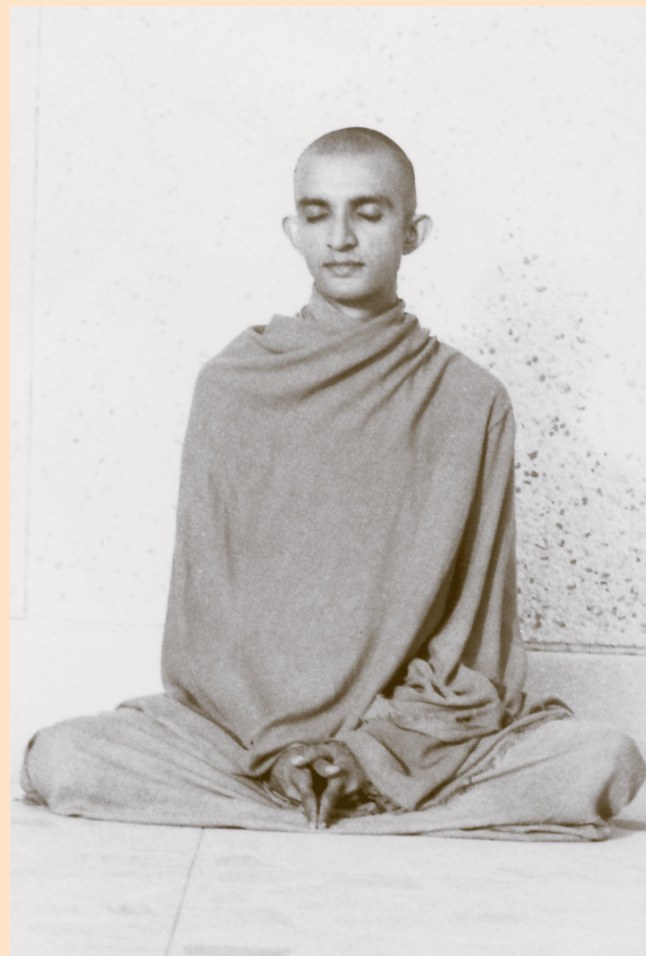
Pratyahara means sensory withdrawal. *Dharana* means concentration. *Dhyana* means absolute identification. And

samadhi means equipoised wisdom. Pratyahara means gradually withdrawing yourself from the outer areas of distraction and involvement, and becoming more focused and centred. Sri Krishna has equated the practice of pratyahara with a tortoise pulling its limbs inside the shell. The tortoise withdraws four legs, one tail and one head. We withdraw the five senses and the mind. How do we achieve this withdrawal of external connection? The answer is simple, by acknowledging all the connections. And then centring oneself on a mantra or yantra. The acknowledging of the sensory and mental connections with people and the environment, and then focusing oneself indicates pratyahara. It is a process of coming back to the centre from outside. And when you are able to maintain that state, it becomes dharana, concentration.

People think that meditation is shutting the eyes and thinking of something Utopian, beautiful or pleasant. When we do this, we are only changing our thought pattern, we are not meditating. Instead of thinking about the devil we are thinking of God, that's all. We have not entered into a meditative state. Meditation is a subject which people want to know about, but a yogi cannot describe what meditation is because there is no such thing as meditation for you to perform or experience. It is a state of being.

There are two processes in life – the process of becoming and the process of being. Your sadhana is to become and what you become is the state which you live. It is an expression of your nature and character. And meditation is a state to be lived. It is an experience of a state of being, not of the process of becoming. In the previous stages of pratyahara, dharana, pranayama or asana you are going through the process of becoming. Here you have become. And therefore, meditation can be described in the following manner as explained by Swami Satyananda.

When you begin to practise 'meditation' initially, three things are interacting with each other. Three components are coming together in the process of learning how to meditate. You, the individual, is component number one, with all your eccentricities of mind and life. The goal of meditation which you want to achieve is component number two. And the process which you adopt to meditate, to come to that point of perfection, is component number three. So, the individual, the goal and the



process – there are these three components that have to come together when you begin meditation. When you are aware of the three simultaneously, then that is the state of pratyahara, the first step. Then, as you go deeper into the meditative experience, one thing drops off – the process, because the process becomes a natural expression and extension of your effort to achieve that meditative goal. Now whenever you sit for meditation, you move into that process naturally and spontaneously, without effort. Now two components remain – the goal of meditation and the individual practising the meditation. This state becomes dharana, an awareness which you hold and retain, which is continuous and without any fluctuation. And then, as you go deeper into that meditative experience, one more thing drops: the individual. You become one with the goal, you merge with the goal. You become that experience. That is dhyana.

As for samadhi, it is just a continued experience of dhyana. The dhyana experience is momentary while the samadhi experience is unbroken and continuous. When Arjuna asked Krishna, "Describe the state of samadhi", Krishna said only one thing, "One who stays established in wisdom is a yogi and has experienced samadhi." This is the state in which the practitioner is established in the drashta state.

When the drashta nature develops, an expanded awareness develops which allows one to perceive the totality of one's nature, interactions and behaviour in one glimpse, in one thought. The focus is not on one point, it is multi-dimensional. When this kind of awareness develops and the mental expressions have been stilled and contained, then one's expressions assume immense power, like water gushing out of a small hole in a dam. One becomes the knower and observer of all that goes on within. One is no longer controlled by situations but becomes the controller and guide of actions, attitudes and behaviour. One finds one's balance, and one who is able to find their balance is known as a yogi. A yogi is not a person who practises yoga, a yogi is a person who has been able to find inner balance. And this is the aim of raja yoga. ॐ



January

Sri Swamiji remained in Munger for most of the year. He took up residence on the sixth floor of the main Ganga Darshan building and introduced an intense wave of sadhana, which progressed from nada yoga into the complete Saundarya Lahari sadhana.

May

Swami Niranjana conducted a tour of Gujarat and Maharashtra, accompanied by Swami Gurukripa. The tour included yoga seminars in Bhuj and Pune a yoga retreat in Lonavala and a seminar at BARC, Trombay, and interviews in Mumbai.

Swami Amritananda inaugurated the National Yoga Convention organized by BHEL Yoga Mitra Mandal, Bhopal, and the Akhil Bharatiya Yoga Sammelan in Patna.

July

A special Nada Yoga seminar was held under Sri Swamiji's direct guidance during the three days prior to Guru Purnima. This followed years of intense practice by the resident swamis of Ganga Darshan. Guru Paduka

Poojan was performed for Paramguru Swami Sivananda and Sri Swamiji dedicated these ceremonies as a part of the worldwide celebrations of Swami Sivananda's birth centenary. Several thousand disciples and devotees took part in the proceedings.

According to a new education policy of the Department of Education, Government of Bihar, students in all government schools were to be taught the preliminary yoga practices. Ganga Darshan therefore received 300 school teachers for yoga training. Three courses were specially arranged to cater for their needs in July, August and September.

August

A Yoga Teacher Training course was conducted at Ganga Darshan.

Swamis Amritananda and Kaivalyananda gave programs in Dhanbad.

September

Swami Niranjana toured Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. The tour included lectures at the Lions Club, programs in Kolkata and the inauguration of a Yoga Convention in Sambalpur. He then travelled to Raigarh and Bilaspur.

October

Swami Niranjana presided over a sadhana seminar in Gondia and gave lectures at the Divya Jivan Sangha, Nandini, Bhilai Steel Plant and the Sangeet Mahavidyalaya in Dongargarh and Rajnandgaon. He gave lectures at the BA College, the Central Jail, Akashvani and the Chamber of Commerce in Raipur.



He inaugurated a yoga convention in Bhubaneswar and lectured at the Orissa University of Agricultural Technology. Swamiji was the state guest of the Government of Orissa. He also visited Konark Mandir, Konark College and the Jagannath temple in Puri.

October–November

Special Kriya Yoga courses were held for an Australian group with Swami Muktibodhananda, a British group led by Swami Pragyamurti and an Italian group led by Swami Anandananda.

November

Swami Niranjana conducted yoga courses in Mathura at the Indian Oil Corporation and at the Indian Oil Refinery in Haldia, West Bengal.



With the twin magnets of Sri Swamiji and Swami Niranjana both in India, the demand for the services of the ashram soared by 1987. Swami Niranjana travelled widely throughout India, conducting seminars and giving initiations. Swamis were continually touring centres and yoga schools throughout India, and the branch ashrams were stretched to capacity. The Government of India started to show an interest in incorporating yoga as an essential part of the school curriculum as people began to take great pride in their ancient heritage.

The Government of Bihar began a program of training middle and high school teachers in yogic techniques. Groups

of 100 teachers at a time came to Ganga Darshan to take one-month Teacher Training Courses. The timing of these courses sometimes overlapped and all our resources were tested out as we strove to cater for their residential requirements. Swami Gorakhnath did the lion's share of the teaching. At the same time, Swami Niranjana continued to care for the devotees who had been coming for guidance for many years.

During the five years from 1983, Swami Niranjana had been preparing the ground and sowing the seeds for later developments. He still confined his activities to India, but in 1987 he conducted an extensive tour of Gujarat and Maharashtra, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal. During the tours, yoga was taught to people from all walks of life. Swamiji would be speaking freely with the inhabitants of jails and universities, helping executives with the problems of stress and then being honoured as the state guest of the governments of different Indian states, all with equal ease.

An uplifting tradition had been started at Ganga Darshan in the form of the chanting of the Mahamrityunjaya mantra 108 times along with a havan every Saturday evening. During this centenary year of Swami Sivananda's birth, Sri Swamiji dedicated this tradition to his guru. Since then, it has continued as an important aspect of the ashram as well as the yoga movement. The healing mantra is chanted for the physical health, mental peace and total wellbeing of all ashram residents, students, guests and sannasins. It is also chanted for those who write to us to pray for divine intervention to overcome their pain and suffering in life.

"To the people of Ganga Darshan it must have seemed as though Sri Swamiji was again taking the reins of the institution while Swami Niranjana was out travelling so much, especially as he was personally conducting the sadhana of the sannasins at Ganga Darshan," remarked my friend enquiringly.

"I guess it did seem like that to some people, and to visitors who would be immediately welcomed by Sri Swamiji's insight and compassion," I replied. "Quite often, Sri Swamiji would eat with us in the gardens, and he would seem to be enjoying life





so much, to be so here and now. At other times however, he would withdraw to the sixth floor and we wouldn't see him for weeks at a time."

The residents were also beginning to get familiar with Swami Niranjana's gentle but firm style. Swami Muktibodhananda, who has authored the masterly commentaries on *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* and *Swara Yoga*, tells us how he won her over.

Swan leela

"During my life at Bihar School of Yoga, Swami Niranjana returned from overseas in 1982 to take charge of the ashram. He presented the picture of a happy extrovert and was considerably 'western' in his attitudes, as he had spent much of his life overseas. On the



other hand I had become quite 'Indian' in my perception of the world after five years of living in the ashram. I had also become a solemn introvert from practising a considerable amount of personal yoga sadhana.

So when Swamiji would try to engage in conversation with me I would be very shy and not know how to communicate unless the topic had anything to do with yoga. He made me very aware that I lacked the ability to converse freely. Nonetheless, I always felt at ease in his company, for several reasons – we were the same age; I had spent time in the Rajnandgaon ashram, sometimes visiting his mother, Ma Dharmashakti, when she would show me her photo albums; he had also stayed in my house in Australia while I was in India. And so at Ganga Darshan, Swami Niranjana

would allow me to sit in his office while he worked, sometimes making small talk and sometimes continuing the task at hand. By allowing me this opportunity and engaging with me I learnt that spiritual life should be a natural expression of my whole personality.

Swamiji showed me that lighthearted playfulness is also a part of spiritual life. Once a devotee had bent down to touch his feet and Swamiji jumped over him. When the devotee stood up, Swamiji was of course not there!

Once he organized a talent day, where we performed skits, dances or songs of our cultural backgrounds. We performed two plays: one about Shiva and Parvati and another on the life of



Jesus Christ. Swamiji placed a specific swami as director because she had been a performer prior to taking sannyasa. People were not being very serious about rehearsals and she became extremely annoyed. Watching this, Swamiji constantly teased her for being too 'serious', which eventually made her realize that her past samskaras were still at work. This is how he would show us our inner selves.

Another time we had an Olympic day where athletic swamis expressed their physical potential. Then there was the Children's Course with 400 children. Only the younger swamis were allowed to stay in the ashram for this. Even Sri Swamiji left for his overseas tours. So Swami Niranjana was left to

organize all of us, which he did brilliantly through yoga, games and plays. Such experiences were valuable in different ways for all of us. It was through this process that I realized that spirituality encompasses the whole human being, not just the 'esoteric spirit'. Swamiji showed through his own example; he was a person who 'walked his talk'. 'Spirituality is doing everything to the best of your ability,' he says, and this is what he has always exemplified.

Swami Niranjana was always himself; he didn't try to be someone he wasn't. If there was an opportunity for a joke and it was appropriate, then that's what you got. He would spontaneously make life fun and bring humour to mundane situations. Sometimes when Sri Swamiji would talk to me about the book I was writing, he would be standing behind pulling faces at me. Or when I was giving a lecture, he would walk in, sit at the back of the room and once again pull faces. From these situations I learnt many aspects of the word 'leela' and what it means to have freedom of spirit and pragmatism simultaneously.

Though Swamiji didn't have any formal schooling in the usual way, he showed incredible genius and understanding. He could expound scientific theories, deftly use new computer software, play the harmonium and drums like a true musician and organize the running of the ashram. Yet with all these abilities he remained humble and a true disciple of his guru. I once saw a photo when he was stationed in America and Sri Swamiji had come to visit. Swami Niranjana and Sri Swamiji were standing face to face with their arms crossed. Sri Swamiji had asked Swamiji to return to Ganga Darshan. What a moment! As a true disciple, Swamiji could not refuse his guru. He could have remained in America and built his own empire there, but he followed the dictates of his inner and outer guru.

Swami Niranjana's yoga is the yoga of humanity. In all the time I had lived in the ashram the swamis had no shoes, toothpaste or soap. Swami Niranjana saw to it that we received these things so we could have better health. Living in the ashram with him as a gurubhai, Swamiji shared himself unreservedly, without pride,



without holding grudges even if someone was rude to him. He took on all the commitments and stresses of running the ashram while quietly and naturally expressing himself. This was a time of growth for everyone, as Sri Swamiji was preparing to leave the ashram. I think Swami Niranjana had the most difficult task, as he was to continue in Sri Swamiji's place, governing his gurubhais and attending the day-to-day running of the ashram, as well as expanding the functions of BSY in different areas. He showed exemplary qualities of mental astuteness and creativity, depth and clarity of thought, as well as sensitivity to individual needs. He was always destined to be a great sevak and that is why Sri Swamiji had chosen him to continue taking yoga from door to door and shore to shore."

Karma Yoga

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Yoga has often been thought of as a series of practices to be done away from the situations of normal social life – in a classroom environment, or in a retreat in the company of ‘spiritual beings’. We have thought that if we practise a particular yoga technique we will get a particular result. It is time we move away from this idea and make yoga a part of our natural expression. Only then can yoga become a process leading to self-realization.

If we practise yoga as a technique to feel good, then we will definitely feel good for a little while. If we practise yoga in order to relax, then we will definitely relax. If we practise yoga to connect with ourselves internally, then that will also become possible. But whatever the attainment may be, it will be momentary, a passing phase, and when one has to confront life’s realities, tensions and frustrations again, then the effect of yoga will take a backseat. Therefore, it needs to be understood that the real experience of yoga comes through karma yoga. Even if you practise hatha yoga, raja yoga, kundalini or kriya yoga you have to combine it with karma yoga in order to have a rich experience of the process.

It is only through perfection in action that one can improve the quality of life. All the masters, after they attained the highest realization, involved themselves in hard karma. Buddha, after attaining nirvana, plunged himself into karma. He did not isolate himself from the world. Mahavir, after attaining nirvana, plunged headlong into karma. He did not seek the isolation of a mountain top. Ramana Maharshi, after attaining moksha, plunged himself into karma. That has been the trend followed by every seer and saint in this age, whether it is Swami Dayananda, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Sivananda or Swami Satyananda.



When we see these living examples of people who have attained realization again involve themselves in action, then we have to stop and think, because the common belief is that nothing needs to be done after realization, that one is free to retire to the mountains and lead a solitary life. It is possibly because of this misunderstanding that sadhakas have been unable to advance in spiritual life. We isolate ourselves by creating walls of silence around us, by meditating for ten or twenty hours a day. But that has no meaning because the transformative experience of life lies in karma, not in meditation.

Spiritual aspirants often hold the notion that karma yoga has no relevance in their lives because it is only hard work. Others think that karma yoga is only service to guru, God or humanity. Some think of karma yoga as selfless service or selfless action. But none of these definitions represents the real spirit of karma

yoga, because karma is an integral part of our personality and life. People have translated karma as action. Some have defined karma as cause and effect. None of these definitions is true either. You have to understand that the whole of life is karma and if you avoid karma then you do not exist.

Nature expresses karma through the elements. The heat of fire is the karma of fire. Expansiveness of space is the karma of space. The movement of the wind is the karma of air. The liquid nature of water is the karma of water. The solidity of earth is the karma of soil. Desires, expectations and thoughts are karmas of the mind. The expressions of the senses are karmas of the body. In fact, we are homogeneous karma. The whole world is homogeneous karma, the whole of creation is homogeneous karma.

Understand that karma is not only cause and effect, not only action. Karma is a subtle ripple-like movement

affecting all dimensions of creation. Karma is the movement that takes place in the body via the senses and in the mind via the mental projections and experiences. If you practise asana, you are altering the karma of the body. If you practise pranayama, you are altering the karma of vitality and the brain. If you practise meditation, you are altering the karma of the subtle mind and of the spirit. This is the way to manage the karmas which influence us in either a positive or negative way. Karma is awareness of the movement of life. It is not hard work, it is not service, it is not cause and effect, it is an understanding of how we interact with ourselves and with our environment.

Karma covers the entire personality. The projections and expressions of the conditioned personality are karma, and the projections and expressions of the personality free from attractions and vrittis are also karma. Bondage is karma and freedom is karma, because life is karma. We may say we are alive because of the life force, but we are alive because of karma. Karma is the life force, the destiny, the direction in which we are all moving. It is the blueprint of our life. We are not directionless. The blueprint of life is karma, at both the physical and transcendental levels. Karma is the actual cause of conditioning, because that conditioning is inherent in the blueprint of karma.

In the third chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna states that the subject of karma yoga has never been understood by people in the world. He said this 5,000 years ago and it holds true today as well, because karma yoga is a subject which involves understanding of human nature, which involves developing awareness of the total personality. It is a process of observing our movement in life from gross to subtle to spiritual.

Karma yoga means recognition of the karma, gradually, at all levels. Begin with the physical karma: how it affects your mind, how it creates disturbance and distress, how it can again bring you happiness and fulfilment, and what kind of



attitudes you need to maintain to fine-tune the karmas. This is the training of karma yoga.

When you associate the word yoga with karma, it takes on a different meaning altogether. It indicates a process, a state in which you are the master of your karma and not a subject of your karma. When you are the master of karma, you become a karma yogi. When you are under the influence of karma, you are subject to karma.

The reason why the word yoga has been added here is because yoga provides an awareness of the karmas, of the point where they are born, of the point where they take place and where they are experienced by a human being. Understanding karma and not being influenced by it, by adding the word yoga, is karma yoga. That is the first sadhana. It is like the recognition

that a beautiful smell is emanating from a rose flower, or a putrid smell is emanating from a piece of flesh, causing the attraction and repulsion. It is not just the acceptance of that attraction or repulsion, but acknowledging it as an experience only, which makes yoga relevant in terms of karma. This is the aspect of karma yoga which Krishna tries to emphasize to Arjuna. Be aware of your karma. Be aware of how you react and respond to situations, and whether it is limiting or uplifting. If you can do that, you are a karma yogi, because you will find your balance in action. When you find your balance in action and become a karma yogi, you attain one rung on the ladder of yoga.

Karma yoga is the ability to adjust to situations and circumstances with a positive, dynamic and optimistic frame of mind, and being able to observe, analyze, channel and control the reactions, the whims of the emotions, accepting or rejecting ideas, and maintaining inner balance all the way through. We need to look at karma yoga as a state of mind that has to be achieved rather than as practices which have to be perfected.

Karma yoga, therefore, is not just hard physical work or sweeping the grounds. It is the yoga of adjusting the mind to the circumstances in which we are involved. With acceptance of a situation, our responses become different. Karma yoga is not even a one-hour yoga practice; it is awareness of the mind twenty-four hours a day. The balance, harmony and non-reactive state of the mind have to be maintained. Then you live karma yoga, whether you are sitting quietly in a chair or are deep in meditation.

This was the message that Krishna gave to Arjuna, and through Arjuna to all of us. In order to transform and harmonize life, in order to understand the secrets of life, in order to understand our relationship with other beings and with the universe, with the cosmos, with creation and with God, we need to understand how we interact with the karmas. It is a very simple thought that Krishna conveyed, yet it is one of the most difficult to understand. ॐ



January

Swami Niranjan, with Swamis Gurukripa and Omkarananda from BSY, conducted a three-day course at Barauni Oil Refinery and a program for school teachers at Barauni township. Swamis Gurukripa and Sambuddhananda from BSY conducted a yoga shivir at the Lions Club in Kolkata and a stress management course at Barauni Oil Refinery. Swami Niranjan conducted the final ceremony.

May

Swami Niranjan visited Australia. During the tour he visited Sydney, Diamond Beach, Mangrove Mountain and Gosford. He then travelled to Singapore. On his return to India he conducted workshops and lectures in Mumbai.

July

An intensive sadhana shivir was conducted under Sri Swamiji's guidance for three days prior to Guru Poornima.

A group of devotees from Greece arrived with Swami Sivamurti for the Guru Poornima celebrations.

August

Sri Swamiji left BSY and began a long pilgrimage to the *siddha* teerthas, sacred places, of India.

Swami Gurupoojananda from BSY travelled to Greece with Swami Sivamurti to assist the ashram.

October

Swamis Gurukripa and Sambuddhananda conducted a seminar at the Lions Safari Park, Kolkata.

October–December

Swami Anandananda from Italy, Swami Sivamurti from Greece, Swami Prakashananda from Germany and Swami Pragyamurti from England made their annual visits with aspirants from their centres.



The year began very quietly with the emphasis on sadhana and self-reliance. Sri Swamiji had begun to spend more time on the sixth floor. Swami Niranjan, Swami Satsangi, and a few others saw him regularly. Overseas groups and close disciples occasionally visited him there for satsang.

Swami Niranjan visited Australia in the first part of the year. It was his first overseas trip since taking over the Presidency in 1983. During his tour he visited Mangrove Mountain ashram briefly, then continued to give lectures and satsangs at ashrams, yoga schools and universities throughout the country and initiated many people into mantra diksha and karma sannyasa.



He travelled through Victoria, as the guest of Swami Muktibodhananda and Dr Swami Karmananda, including Melbourne, Rocklyn and Gippsland. He gave satsang and live broadcasts in Tasmania as the guest of Swami Alokanda and Swami Ajnananda, conducted medical symposiums in New South Wales with Swami Shankardevananda and intensive sadhana retreats in Queensland with Swami Muktananda. While returning to India he met with Swami Atmananda in the Singapore ashram. On arriving in India he conducted workshops and public lectures in Mumbai, returning to Munger in time for the Guru Poornima celebrations.

For the three days prior to Guru Poornima an intensive sadhana shivir was conducted in Ganga Darshan under Sri Swamiji's personal guidance. He made all the arrangements himself, in full detail, keeping us all busy for months with the preparation work. And he personally arranged the whole program in honour of his guru Swami Sivananda. Nada yoga, chanting the Saundarya Lahari and mantra anushtana formed the basis of the program, and Sri Swamiji himself sang and danced to the delight of all.

"It must have seemed like a renaissance! Sri Swamiji personally sending invitations to his devotees, and looking after all the arrangements just as he used to."

"It did seem like a renaissance," I agreed. "Thousands flocked to Ganga Darshan for Guru Poornima that year – the main hall of the Main Building was not nearly big enough. Crowds listened through loudspeakers on the lawns outside, and when Sri Swamiji rose to leave the hall the sannyasins had to move quickly as the crowd surged forward."

"Then on 8.8.88, unknown to the swamis, Sri Swamiji set out alone, on foot, from Ganga Darshan, beginning a long pilgrimage to the siddha teerthas of India. He took only a spare dhoti, mala and 108 rupees, the amount Swami Sivananda had given him when he first set out on parivrajaka so many years ago."

"Your original question was on how people reacted to Sri Swamiji's renunciation of this place and his gurudom in 1983."

You see, in his compassion he had been preparing us all for a long time. We had to have that preparation so that we could appreciate his devotion to the ultimate reality when he set out on this journey."

I particularly remember that there was an earthquake a couple of days after his departure. In the early hours of the morning we were shaken from our sadhana by the vibration of the buildings and a most strange sound. Everyone poured out through the gates of the buildings into the relative safety of the open air as fast as possible. In Munger town many buildings came down.

Within seconds we were summoned to the kutir by a strange siren wailing, and there was the unforgettable



picture of Swami Niranjana operating a mechanical siren to gather us all together and still the panic. The disoriented and frightened people were soon calmed by his unruffled presence, irrepressible smile and jokes, and quickly he began to send teams out to assess the damage within Ganga Darshan, in Sivananda Ashram and among our neighbours. Then he quietly contributed to setting things straight and opening things out."

If his presence of mind and administrative skills impressed those working directly under him, it was his yogic wisdom that truly won the people over and drew aspirants from around the world to Ganga Darshan. When Swami Ajnananda from Tasmania visited with a group of sixty in December, Swamiji answered their questions not only with the astuteness of a yogi steeped in insight but with the masterful touch of a guru. While putting together a compilation of these satsangs, Swami Ajnananda said, "The answers to the questions speak for themselves and require no further elucidation, but the text cannot convey the dignity, the lightning sense of humour, or the depth of wisdom which came not only from the recorded answers, but also from the answers given . . . with a look . . . with a gesture . . . to the unasked."

"What kind of questions were these?" asked my listener.

"Let's see an example," I said, picking up an old edition of the volume called *On the Wings of the Swan* in which Swamiji's earliest satsangs were published. "Here is one that is very much, well, Swami Niranjana."

Q: What is consciousness in simple, layman's terms?

Swamiji: When you see yourself in a mirror, how do you see yourself? The other way round, right? Your right is left and your left is right. When you see yourself in a crystal ball, how do you see? Upside down, right? Totally reversed. And when you can perceive yourself as yourself, then that is consciousness. When the consciousness looks in the mirror and sees the reflection the other way round, then that is known as the mind. When the consciousness looks in the crystal ball and sees itself upside



down, then that is known as the ego – ahamkara. And when you can look at yourself as you are, then that is consciousness.

Simplicity and profundity did go hand in hand in Swami Niranjana's teachings. He was our guide during these times of change and also the link to Sri Swamiji. In fact, Sri Swamiji called him several times during the course of his mendicancy to the various tirthas he happened to be at that moment. Sometimes the meetings were private and sometimes surrounded by untold thousands of people, such as at the Kumbha Mela. Sometimes Swami Niranjana reported what happened for our inspiration, and had poems and extracts from Sri Swamiji's diary printed in *Yoga* and *Yoga Vidya* magazines to give glimpses of this new plane of vision and sharing these experiences with devotees around the world.

From the desk of Swami Niranjana, 8.10.88

"Many of you may already know that Sri Swamiji left the Munger ashram on 8th August for a pilgrimage of the siddha teerthas in India. He left the ashram as a parivrajaka, carrying with him only 108 rupees which was given to him by BSY as a mark of respect and devotion, as he firmly declined any other assistance.

In the tradition of sannyasa we have read that detachment and vairagya are the true characteristics of a sannyasin and as Swami Sivanandaji said, it is this spirit of sannyasa which we find resplendent in Sri Swamiji.

I recently had the honour of having his darshan at Deoghar where he had come for the darshan of Baidyanath Jyotirlingam after travelling to Kashi Vishwanath, Vindhyavasini,

Dwarkadheesh, Vaishnava Devi, Gangotri, Yamunotri, Kedarnath, Badrinath, Haridwar and Sivanandashram in Rishikesh.

During the meeting I requested Sri Swamiji to come to Ganga Darshan for some time, but he firmly stated that he has no obligation or attachment with the gurudom of BSY. The first phase of his mission, he said, culminated with the foundation of Ganga Darshan and the next phase of his mission begins with his parivrajaka life, and whenever in future he visits BSY, it will be in the capacity of an aspirant. In Sri Swamiji's own words...

*With nothing on my body
And with nothing in my hands
Let me roam on the banks of the Ganga
With the name of Shiva on my lips
And the thought of Devi and Durga in my mind.
Let me not even know that I exist
And when I die, I will not know that I am dying."*

At times Swami Niranjana seems so western in outlook but, deeply inspired by his guru, he plunged himself and those aspirants coming to him for guidance, into profound disciplines which form the basis of the sannyasa tradition. After Sri Swamiji set out on his new journeys, Swami Niranjana again began to spend most of his time at Ganga Darshan guiding the sadhana of the sannyasins, the activities of BSY, the IYFM which was spreading through more and more countries, SM with its village programs for the poor and the YRF with its research programs. Through this constant activity there remained a steadfast feeling that new sannyasins enter a tradition doubly blessed. I thought, "If we can persuade Swami Satyaswaroop to speak, he can explain this."

And, surprisingly, the usually silent Satyaswaroop began.

The dawn of an era

"At the dawn of the new era, this man has come who is committed to transforming the earth, rekindling the luminous divine light of heaven itself. He is reawakening the cherished, refined cultural legacy of vedic India, once more lighting the lamp of yoga in

every corner of the earth. He is the very form of jnana, karma and bhakti, adorned with tyaga and tapasya and inspired by compassion.

Through his Herculean effort this human incarnation of divinity is spreading a golden message to the masses and the day is not far off when the entire world will be fragrant with the spirit of sannyasa.

Our father guru, Swami Satyananda, referred to Swami Niranjan as his manas putra, his willed child. Evolved souls are evoked for the attainment of specific purposes in the form of manas putras. He came into this world as the disciple of a guru who was anxiously awaiting his arrival. He was the immaculate spirit Sri Swamiji had called down to help with his mission. Surrender was a part of his childhood, and it shines through his mother's stories of his entertaining childhood pranks. He received bhakti as a legacy. The hands of Sri Swamiji were always on his head, conveying blessings. The mere darshan of Swami Niranjan, his lean figure, long arms and the three lines of ash on his bright forehead, is captivating and sends a clear message.

His guru's mission was always to make people's lives yogic. Sri Swamiji is a great yogi, a master of many siddhis, apart from being a sannyasin, and is known throughout the world as a great teacher. His spirit of service towards humanity will live on eternally. He initiated Swami Niranjan into the ancient sannyasa tradition of India and is now living the lifestyle of a paramahansa. Therefore Swami Niranjan has the inspiration of true sannyasa always before him. He himself is adorned with all the qualities of sannyasa.

His childhood was permeated by bhakti yoga, his adolescence by hatha and raja yoga and his youth by sannyasa yoga. At the confluence of these three, Ma Saraswati has emerged in the guise of jnana yoga and manifests in knowledge of the Upanishads and the Vedas. The harmonious strains of the veena touch the core of our hearts. On hearing him sing his favourite bhajan, 'Gurudev Daya Karake . . .', I felt for the first time in my life the power of bhajans to bring tears to our eyes. His voice

has tremendous power. It can halt moving feet and the storm of thoughts. It can change the heartbeat and instil an innate peace. His eyes hold such an energy that it seems that they can bring the dead to life. Whenever I face his eyes I feel as though I am losing my existence.

An important attraction of his personality is the unique blend of karma and jnana, which is a foremost achievement in a life of sadhana. Since the beginning of life on this planet, the law of Nature has been guiding or pushing us towards the ultimate knowledge, the experience of Brahman. Most people, even after experiencing the play of karma throughout their life, quit their karmabhoomi without ever having been

aware of this. Only those who receive the blessings of the guru are able to understand the truth yet, surprisingly, his blessings are there for all if we are capable of receiving them.

Our lives are like a river. If we struggle after our own desires through intellectualism and ego, we miss the power and direction of the current. We can receive his blessings if we recognize the flowing stream of our life and are willing to be carried wherever it will take us, without putting up a struggle. Swami Niranjan's luminous nature creates a mirror for all aspirants in which they can, knowingly or unknowingly, have a glimpse of their potential self.





October 2, 1988, was an important day in my life. I had arrived at the ashram the day before. The next morning I went to Swamiji to ask him for some karma yoga. As I came near him, my steps automatically halted. For the first time in my life I felt a pure awareness of my body and breath. The storm in my mind calmed down and my awareness was purely in my breath. A strong experience had arisen in me of something else, another realm, and this had simultaneously made me realize that I was also established in body and breath.

It takes good luck to have the company of great men. I am proud of my association with Swami Niranjanananda. On April 10, 1992, he initiated me into the sannyasa tradition and accepted me as a disciple. That was a memorable experience in my life.

Swami Niranjan's life is an embodiment of the principles of the Bhagavad Gita. He is full of humour. The simplicity of his style captivates the hearts of devotees."

Guru

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Guru is a term that represents an attribute of God, the light that dispels darkness. This darkness, nescience or *avidya* is the covering over the light of the heart, which has to be removed. The centre of this light is the heart, not the mind.

You have to deal with the mind yourself. For the practice of yoga and managing the mind you do not need a guru. Systems have been defined very clearly and you can learn and practise them from a book or any teacher, and receive some benefits. However, when it comes to removing the conditionings from life and expressing the unconditional nature, when it comes to removing the veil of *avidya* from

the heart, the guru is necessary. The guru tells how to let go of the ego and surrender, how to develop faith, conviction and clarity of perception. So the role of the guru is to open the heart. The role of yoga is to open the mind. The role of an ashram is to open the perceptions which allow you to involve yourself in *purusharthas*.

Guru is also inside us; the power to transform and become enlightened is within all of us. However, this power, energy or *shakti* is an attribute of the *turiya* state of consciousness, and in order to access this source of power, we need a catalyst, an external agent. The external agent is the physical form of a person who is recognized by the aspirant as guru.

The physical guru is someone who knows the process of self-transformation and can guide aspirants accordingly. He is someone who has gone through the process of personal transformation, who knows the pitfalls on the spiritual journey and can guide the aspirant to overcome those pitfalls. That is the essence of the relationship between guru and disciple, and it is based on understanding, trust, belief and a realization that here is a person who can guide us.

How can one develop this relationship with the guru? There are two ways. Firstly, if you think of and identify with the guru as a person with a body and mind, name and form, then developing the relationship is emulating the life and teachings of the guru. Secondly, if you identify with the transcendental aspect of the guru, then again it is realization of the spiritual qualities and nature within you. Therefore, it is said that the guru is within. The external person becomes the catalyst to give the inner experience of guru.

The aspirant must strive to develop a sense of identification with the energy and spirit of the guru. He must strive to evolve to that level of connection where although guru and disciple live in two bodies, their spirit is one. The only way to achieve this is by being open. Generally by openness people





mean dumping all their problems on the guru. That is not real openness or open communication. Open communication means guru knows you from inside out and you adhere to the guidance of the guru without bringing your mind into it. The guru does not exist for your intellectual satisfaction, but for your spiritual development.

So, the only way to have open communication with the guru is by developing trust and faith, becoming innocent and simple, and allowing this to happen spontaneously.

Just as affection is the basis of the relationship between a parent and child, love between a couple, and pleasure between

a human being and life, the foundation of the relationship between guru and disciple is trust. There are disciples who, on one hand, invite their guru to be everything and, on the other, hide many things from him. There is rejection as well as acceptance. And if something goes wrong, the excuse is, "You already know everything."

Such an attitude is not an indication of a relationship based on trust.

In my own relationship with my guru, my life is an open book in front of him. My thoughts, mistakes, limitations, ambitions, arrogance, wisdom, whatever there may be, are laid bare before

him. In my interactions I have only benefited from being more and more open. There has been no moment in my life where I can say that I've been misguided by my guru. Some people express such sentiments simply because they are unable to develop that level of inner trust. Only trust enables one to unite. A moth will fly to a flame with the idea of becoming one with the light. The moth is ready to sacrifice itself. That is real trust.

Openness, clear communication, acceptance, trust and understanding are some of the components that can make the guru-disciple relationship come alive. The most important point is to accept and serve and follow the teachings. There can't be any criticism. Right now our expectations of the guru change all the time. For the sake of our ego, we want a perfect guru and cannot accept any flaw in him. But we must remember that anyone who comes into this world is tainted by the senses. The tradition says that if the guru cannot be a human being with the same joys, affections, passions and frustrations in life, then he is not a guru. However, we are not able to see this because we connect with the critical mind and not with the simple, innocent mind. If we see the guru with a cup of tea, we think that he is bad because spiritual beings should not drink tea. You are projecting your own ideas on to him. If your ideas are perfect, then you don't need a guru. But if you are not perfect, then let guru be the farmer to cultivate your field in life.

Guru's grace or God's grace does not descend until there is absolute selfless projection of one's ego. And for this to take place, all the dross of human nature and personality has to be removed first. One has to work to make this happen. One has to work to purify oneself and to open the channel by which grace can descend. The channel which opens the flow of grace is the channel of innocence. Learning to be innocent, humble, simple, uninhibited and free from the effects of ego is the sadhana and training given to be able to receive the grace of God or guru. It is much more complex and difficult than any yoga which one may perfect. One has to strive to purify the mind from raga

and dwesha, from the experiences which give pleasure and displeasure. This is the first level of purity that is demanded. I am not saying recommended, I am saying demanded. The second level of purity is to be innocent. When you are innocent, you don't apply your intellectual mind to decide things. Rather, you become like an empty flute from which new melodies can flow when played by an expert player.

The actual interaction taking place between guru and disciple cannot be explained in words. There comes a time when physical boundaries disappear and internally they become one. You see two people, one old and one young, one sitting quietly and the other running dynamically around. That is the external act, but internally they are in tune. Internally they are flowing with the situations and the need, representing a harmony between their frequencies.

Swami Satyananda lived with his guru Swami Sivananda for twelve years and then left the ashram under the mandate of his guru and never saw him again. But the connection which he has makes him aware of the presence of his guru all the time even today. Swami Sivananda had met his guru only for ten minutes in his life when he was being initiated and never again, and that spirit fuelled the fire in him and made him one with his guru.

Proximity to guru does not indicate faith in guru. Coming close or living in the same environment as the guru does not indicate truthfulness to the guru. Truthfulness and devotion to guru are expressed when you are able to follow his teachings with total faith and devotion. Those who believe in adoration of guru are insecure in their social life and look for emotional support or a reason to feel good. Bhakti is not staring at the guru's face and saying, "You are divine, you are great." Bhakti is living the spirit of the guru as it is being lived by the guru. So follow the teachings. Live according to the teachings. That is the only way to express faith and devotion to guru.



Similarly, what is termed as grace is the outcome of a connection, understanding, love, trust or faith that a person can place on the other person. This connection does not only remain an external, intellectual connection, but becomes deep.

You begin to love your guru and your guru begins to love you. You begin to place your faith and trust in him. Whatever you give one hundred percent, you receive one hundred percent. That intimate connection is grace. So grace is never one-sided. When love and faith are shared in equal intensity, the combination becomes grace. And this connection, this relationship becomes the force of inspiration, support and motivation. When you are in deep states of sadhana in unknown, uncharted dimensions of consciousness and do

not know what to do, then suddenly guidance comes. Since this connection knows no distance or boundaries, that force becomes alive within you and you live within it.

If you want to experience how the fire burns, throw something in the fire, but remember that the fire will consume it and you will not get it back in the same form. Throw a piece of paper in and the fire will burn it. All you get back is ashes. Similarly with grace. You give love, submerge yourself in that, you'll receive that back. You give your faith and trust, submerge yourself in that and you will get that back. So grace is what you are able to give and what you are able to receive. That is my understanding and my experience in this journey of sannyasa. ॐ



During the five years from 1983 to 1988, Swami Niranjana had gradually prepared the ground and sowed the seeds for later developments. During 1989 and 1990 the emphasis moved towards increased responsibility being given to the branch ashrams with the main centre of Ganga Darshan becoming the place for intense training under Swamiji's personal guidance. Even so, Teacher Training Courses were conducted at Ganga Darshan during January, March, April, September and December, and Health Management Courses were conducted in March, June, September and December. Kriya Yoga and Swara Yoga courses were also held in the cooler months.

January

Swami Niranjana arrived at Prayag for the Kumbha Mela on Makar Sankranti and met Sri Swamiji. Swami Niranjana spoke at a function organized by the residents of Jawayat, and gave discourses at the Officer's Club, Barauni, and for jawans of the Central Industrial Security Force. A team of seven swamis taught a series of classes at Barauni Oil Refinery from January to December. A

series of courses was also conducted at the Indian Oil Refinery in Mathura, UP, in August and December, by Swamis Omkarananda, Gurukripa, Swaroopananda and Asheshananda.

February

On the 6th, Mauni Amavasya, Swami Niranjana again joined Sri Swamiji in Allahabad.

From the 23rd to 25th, Swami Niranjana went to Delhi to conduct a workshop at the Hotel Vasant Continental for the Indian Oil Corporation.

A yoga camp at the Lions' Safari Park, Kolkata, and classes for children were conducted by BSY swamis.

The Yoga Research Fellowship (YRF) began a five-year study to investigate the effects of yoga on bronchial asthma. A committee

of eminent doctors and scientists, deliberating at Ganga Darshan from 10th to 13th February, prepared a blueprint for the study.

March–April

On the 25th and 26th, Swami Niranjana guided a program at the Yoga Sansthan in Begusarai.

From 27th March to 2nd April, Swami Gurukripa conducted yoga seminars at the Yoga Seva Samiti in Udaipur, Rajasthan.

May

Swami Niranjana conducted a program at the Yoga Vidya Kendra, Phulka, on the 26th.

June

Two special Teacher Training Courses were conducted in English and Hindi for teachers from Bihar middle schools. This was part



of a government plan to revitalize the education system of India by incorporating yoga into the school curriculum and teaching methods. Teachers from Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengal and Maharashtra also attended.

The YRF team conducted the Asthma Research Seminar in Barshi.

July

Guru Poornima was celebrated as BSY's Silver Jubilee under the guidance of Swami Niranjana.

August

From the 5th to 11th, Swami Niranjana was with Sri Swamiji in Trayambakeshwar.

Swami Gorakhnath conducted yoga courses in Vidisha, MP, from 30th August to 10th September, and in Ganjbasoda and Balod during September.

Swami Kaivalyananda and swamis from Dhanbad ashram conducted programs at Raipur ashram and a seminar in Jharia from August to October.

September–October

On Swami Sivananda's birth anniversary, Swami Niranjana conducted satsang in Bariarpur village, arranged by the Yoga Mitra Mandal (YMM). Free medical examinations and medicines were given by qualified workers from Sivananda Math (SM). He also visited Sitarampur Najira, one of the 20 villages included in SM's aid program, presiding over a one-day function organized by the local YMM and speaking on the importance of bringing yoga to village people.

During the sadhana shivir held at the time of Durga Pooja, Swami Niranjana gave guidance and initiation to aspirants.

October

Swami Gurukripa conducted yoga seminars in schools in Aizwal, Mizoram; in Katihar, Bihar, and in Duliajan, Assam.

Swami Gorakhnath conducted yoga courses in Sambalpur, Durg, Dalli Rajhara and Bhopal.

A new country ashram was opened in Montescudo, Rimini, by Swami Anandananda, Italy.

November–December

From the 14th to 16th December, Swami Niranjana conducted

a yoga seminar in Rajnandgaon, accompanied by a large group of swamis, including Swamis Kaivalyananda and Gorakhnath from India, Swami Anandananda from Italy and Swami Brahavidyananda from the USA. He spoke at several colleges and schools on various aspects of yoga and attended a function arranged by the Dongargarh Yoga Mitra Mandal.

From 30th November to 11th December, local doctors attended a Yoga Asthma Study Camp in Raipur.

From 16th to 30th December, YRF conducted a Yoga Asthma Study Course at Ganga Darshan.

Swami Niranjana was initiated into the Paramahansa sampradaya by his guru, Swami Satyananda, at Rikhia, on the 31st December 1989 at midnight.



On the first day of the New Year of 1989, we received the following message from Swami Niranjana, indicating that we were on the brink of new dimensions of seva sadhana.

From the desk of Swami Niranjana, 1.1.89

"People throng to religion, gurus and spiritual organizations for their guidance and the achievement of their desires. In return they get self-satisfaction and many of their desires are also fulfilled. The problems of this planet may not get solved, but they get an opportunity to dip into the ocean of knowledge. They derive wisdom, but it remains unexpressed in their behaviour, for the droplets of wisdom which they acquire evaporate in the hot sands of samsara."





The channelling of sublime wisdom into creative action is a rare gift which only a few extraordinary individuals possess. On an encounter with Sri Swamiji, even if it is a casual one, one is deeply impressed that he epitomizes such a person. Behind his personality flows a stream in which wisdom and action are the main currents. The realization of the Supreme, given in the Brahma Sutras and the selfless action of the Bhagavad Gita are a spontaneous expression which have become one in him.

Renunciation, giving of alms, sacrifice and austerities are performed by many people, but it is rarely done with a vision of the future. Rather, we see that it is done more for self-contentment. One kind of action moves, motivates and inspires the world, another is only for self-indulgence. We are counted in the latter category.

To motivate, inspire and provide direction to the world, a leader is required who embodies anger as well as pardon and peace, brilliance and shrewdness as well as simplicity and innocence, down-to-earth awareness as well as farsightedness. One in whom both the fiery brilliance of Parashurama as well as the astute and calm wisdom of Rama are manifest, the glow and harsh warmth of the sun, and the silvery, soothing and healing coolness of the moon. One who symbolizes the determination and righteous wisdom of Krishna and Yudhishtira. Such a

multifaceted, mysterious and practical leader can mould a definite future from the gathering of the scattered, diverted and dissipated energies.

Upon meeting and seeing Sri Swamiji, all know deep down that he is such a leader. At present he is on a pilgrimage of India and its siddha teerthas with a definite constructive purpose. He is infusing the heart and mind with a new energy, a new mantra to unite the future. Be ready to receive him."

Expressing this teaching on a practical level, Sivananda Math (SM) decided to include 20 villages of the Munger district in its upliftment program, beginning with five villages: Ramdiri, Sitakund, Nathtola, Sitarampur Najira and Jawayat. SM began dispensing planned medical aid for treatment of chest infections, gastrointestinal disorders, scabies, hookworm, bronchitis, leucorrhoea, heart diseases, polio, etc. and provided vaccinations for the prevention of rinderpest to the cattle. The institution was requested to install 50 hand-pumps for drinking water during drought this year by the Bihar Government, and ably completed this work in Munger district.

This year, in fact, turned out to be a whirlwind of activity. Swami Niranjana met with Sri Swamiji on 14th January at the



Kumbha Mela, when the sannyasins of India converge to take purifying dips in the holy waters where the rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati meet. On Mauni Amavasya, 6th February, Swami Niranjana again joined Sri Swamiji in Allahabad.

Among the spiritual luminaries he met during this time were Deoraha Baba, Swami Vishnudevananda of Nirvani Akhara, Sri Godavari Giri, a great Naga sannyasin of the Juna Akhara, Pilot Baba, Swami Santoshi Mata of Haridwar, Kalyan Baba of Udaseen Sampradaya, Amarkantak, Dr Brahmanamitra Awasthi, a research scholar from Keshawananda Yoga Sansthan and Swami Chidananda of Divine Life Society, Rishikesh.

From 5th to 11th August, Swami Niranjana was called to Trayambakeshwar where Sri Swamiji received the vision of the cremation ground, *chitabhoomi*, of Sati, which led to the foundation of the Sri Panchdashnam Paramahansa Alakh Bara in Deoghar. Sri Swamiji sent a message to the swamis of Munger that his aim was only to attain conscious awareness of the Name twenty-four hours a day.

Swami Niranjana's meetings with the leaders of the sannyasa tradition in India during this time perhaps acted as a catalyst as he reflected on the way things were shaping up in BSY. Sri Swamiji had revolutionized the structure of initiations within BSY by introducing karma sannyasa. Swami Niranjana at this time began to work on the concept of *jignasu* sannyasa.

Karma sannyasa had been reserved more for married couples or people who recognized they still had specific duties or ambitions to perform and, therefore, could not take sannyasa although they were living by its ideals. Swami Niranjana now, rather than giving sannyasa directly to those who approached him and who were sure that they had no karmic commitments by which they felt obliged, introduced a yellow dhoti and an interim initiation, *jignasu*, seekers, where people were encouraged to receive further training before committing themselves to the sannyasa lifestyle.

Simultaneously, the work of BSY continued with successful courses at Ganga Darshan for Indian and overseas students.

So we can see the way BSY was functioning in 1989, with Swami Niranjan as the magnetic centre. Under his guidance the activities of Sivananda Math (SM) also began to develop. He personally conducted satsang at Bariarpur village on Swami Sivananda's birthday, one of many villages receiving free medical aid from SM. He also visited Sitarampur Najira, one of 20 villages now adopted in SM's official aid program. Yoga programs were organized in all the villages. There would be satsang and kirtan, but afterwards any who were sick could come and meet the doctors of SM for free consultation and medicines. Participating in these programs was a very moving experience.

For some, accepting Swami Niranjan as an extension of Sri Swamiji was a process, but there were those for whom this happened spontaneously. Swami Vibhooti tells us how she came to see the reflection of the guru in the disciple.

Simply Swan

"How can I define or understand something so uniquely unpredictable and elusive as Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati? At best I have only had brief glimpses, small insights into what I imagine he might be. I cannot capture him any more than one can catch the wind in a net, or categorize him any better than I can dissect my own atman. He eludes me at every turn of the Way. Perhaps it is his pure simplicity which makes him so incomprehensible.

Even though Swami Niranjan is not my original guru, I cannot say that he is just a friend, brother, teacher, inspirer, comforter or guide, and yet he has taken on all these roles for me at different times during my spiritual journey, uplifting, supporting, encouraging, occasionally chiding, and gently shoving me along the path. I have constantly and unfailingly found shelter and protection under the expanse of his caring wings. For me he is simply – Swan.

When he alighted upon Belfast (Northern Ireland) in the summer of 1978 I was helping a swami to prepare for the Dublin Convention over which Sri Swamiji was to preside. He had come to oversee and direct all the preparations and when I first saw

him I thought that some strange extra-terrestrial being had come into our midst. I did not know what to make of this strange new entity who had descended into my life, for he did not appear to be of this earthly plane so, I tentatively christened him Dr Spock after the Martian from the outer space series, Star Trek. From my first sight of him I have been wondering who is this being called Niranjan – the immaculate?

Even the simplest of his actions had something of the exquisite about it I had never seen even in a woman. For example, before I left to pick him up at the airport, one lady who had met him when he lived in the Belfast ashram as a child, handed me a colourful packet of children's sweets for him called dolly mixtures (although he was then aged nineteen). In the car I handed them to him. He received them silently and slipped them into his pocket.

As we drove from the airport he quietly removed them and, as I watched fascinated, slowly and carefully removed the plastic wrapper without damaging it in the slightest, folded it neatly and placed it in the dashboard all with one-pointed silence. He then proceeded to empty the contents on to his lap, dividing the tiny sweets into neat piles containing the different varieties,



and handed a pile to me and the two others in the car with a smile sweeter than the dolly mixtures themselves. Here was something truly unique for me! For the first time I witnessed, not just perfection in a simple action but the art of giving and sharing with others you did not even know in such a beautiful and charming way.

Nevertheless, I was apprehensive of him from the beginning; he seemed so silently unapproachable with those dark fathomless eyes, so unusually proud and aloof, but with a different sort of pride not born of the gross ego like mine. He was such an inspired and dynamic young man, so confident and self-assured with his plans in his briefcase for conquering America with a chain of Satyananda Ashrams! Now I understand that what I thought to be pride was the pride of a vairagi, of one who is a detached witness to all around him.

The first morning after his arrival he slept a little late as he had been working late on the convention program, so I brought the tea up to the room he was sharing with the other swami. I was surprised to find him lying motionless in shavasana with the sheets completely undisturbed on top of him as if he had never moved all night. I approached the bedside table, and coming closer to him I saw a divine child lying in deep sleep, the most beautiful serene smile playing on his angelic face. His breathing

was soft, slow and rhythmic like that of a child. By contrast, the swami in the other bed was snoring like a pig, sheets crumpled and strewn in all directions. In the room two bodies were lying. I knew that one was that of an earthly man, but was the other?

Within a very short time I was to find out to my delight that he was not always so withdrawn and aloof as he had first appeared to be. I would suddenly find myself being showered with nuts and raisins which he dropped from the top floor window. I had to catch them as I worked in the garden below!

Being of a rather introverted nature and coming from a Christian background I was taking spiritual life a little too seriously. However, very soon, I realized that this was not actually necessary. One day I was going to take my first yoga class and feeling rather anxious about it. As I passed him sitting serenely on the sofa I was moved to ask for his blessings. Whereupon he spontaneously threw up his dhoti clad legs, clapped his hands under his knees in pranam (salutation) and, giving me a broad cheery grin, declared, 'Hari On' in a jovial voice. Spiritual life, I realized then, was not at all the dry matter I had thought it to be! And, of course, the class went perfectly; the blessing having been given in the unique way only he can do.

From then on, of all the qualities and faces of Swan that I have seen over the years it is that of the child which has captivated me, delighted me, softened me and pulled me through many difficult times. A smile from him is totally disarming and leaves one helpless, just as one is helpless before an open innocent child.

When Sri Swamiji called Swan back from America to Munger to take over the mission in Munger, from the outset he was a very inspired and idealistic leader who put his whole heart into everything he did, from administrative duties to badminton and volleyball, from cleaning the toilet to satsang and singing. Just like Swami Sivananda he knew very well how to extract work from others, 'through kindness, service and love'. He never acted like a 'big babu' or preached at us in any way. The perfection of his own daily life was all the teaching that was necessary to inspire and motivate us to want to change our lives and behaviour.

However, I do remember groaning when I read his early morning notice, with the computer picture of a man running at full speed and the title 'Call to Action' in big bold letters. When the karate classes started with the black belt instructor, there was no escape. While we all puffed and panted, Swan himself moved silently and effortlessly among us like a soft breeze. In fact, everything he did had a subtlety and finesse about it. Even though I did not fully realize what was happening on the higher plane, over the years his influence slowly and surely pervaded me like the delicate smell of sandal. Sri Swamiji, on the other hand, had blasted into one's life like a blazing comet but Swan's



way was always gentle and persuasive, and as I see now, equally powerful.

He always liked to make people light and happy, and no matter how much work was heaped upon him it always appeared that he was doing nothing at all, and that he always had time for everybody. One morning he came into the office wearing new shoes which had a squeak. He made us all laugh squeaking around the office, except for one swami who remained straight-faced. So he proceeded to walk slowly round and round her desk with his squeak and mischievous smile, much to the amusement

of all present, except that one swami. After he had gone she remarked, 'Swami Niranjan will never grow up.' I remember thinking, 'I hope he never does. No matter how great he may become I hope he will never lose that joyful childlike quality of making everybody happy.'

Swan had an infinite variety of ways of teaching and lightening any situation. An erroneous rigid pattern of thinking, or a negative mood would then be broken and you would become more balanced in your approach. In this way he often saved me from my own mind and jolted me back to a more normal and healthy perception of life.

The first ashram computer arrived in the kutir and Sri Swamiji gave the duty of feeding it to me. The whole day I sat in his room, punching on the keys. One day I was alone in the kutir with Sri Swamiji. His body was sleeping and a silent power pervaded the building. The whole kutir became permeated by the fragrant smell of sandal, although no incense had been lit. It was a time of intense peace. When he woke the smell of sandal disappeared and the silence was broken by his voice speaking to someone who had just entered. Intermittently the one addressed answered in a most gentle and reverential tone overflowing with love, 'Yes Swamiji, Yes Swamiji.' So much tenderness was there in that voice that it completely distracted me from my work, it carried so much pure love for guru that I felt the vibration melting me. The speaker was Swan, and when I heard his voice I understood the meaning of true surrender, of real humility and obedience.

When we first moved to Ganga Darshan hill in 1982 there were no terraces or roads. When Swan came in 1983 there were parts which were so densely overgrown and snake-infested that nobody penetrated there. So, on Sundays Sri Swamiji used to call us all to the kutir at five in the morning and from there we would all take khurpee, scythe, knife, hatchet, broom or baskets to clear the area. On one such occasion Swan, unseen by Sri Swamiji, had procured a rather sharp looking sword with which to attack the jungle. Wielding this sword, and with a dhoti tied around his waist, he looked like a dashing young prince, leading his fellows into battle with the underworld. Just as he was getting into

the part, followed by a small division of ashram residents and brandishing his weapon with great skill (and showing off a bit) Sri Swamiji suddenly appeared upon the scene and commanded, 'Niranjan, put that sword down!' Instantaneously the sword dropped, the head bent in submission, and there was the child again – standing in humble surrender before the father. It was yet another lesson in obedience. My mind flashed back to the first time I had seen this father-son aspect of Swan when he was with Sri Swamiji. We were all sitting having lunch with Sri Swamiji when we returned to Belfast after the Dublin convention. The young conqueror and confident lecturer of nineteen had



vanished and there squatting and eating his lunch was a small child, relaxed and carefree in the presence of his guru.

It was a quiet Sunday afternoon in March. Sri Swamiji had been gone from the ashram for almost a year. I was lying in my room resting after lunch and thinking deeply of Sri Swamiji and where he might be at that time (would we ever see him again?), when I seemed to slip into a different state of relaxed awareness. My eyes were open and the room appeared to be bathed in a soft and warm rosy light. It felt as if my guru was all around me, even as I was longing for his presence with some sadness in my heart.

Suddenly the bedroom door burst open and I heard the jubilant voice of Swan reassuring me, 'Yes Vibhooti, I am here!' His voice was as clear as if he had been standing right next to me. He entered the room with invisible arms flung wide open, full of the fresh optimism of youth and offering all the joy of a new spring. It was a reminder to me that Sri Swamiji and Swan are one and the same. Sri Swamiji's words came flooding back to me at that moment, 'Look for me in Niranjan!'

On another fresh winter day, Swan was sitting in his tent and many people from all over the world had gathered around him



for satsang. Some German intellectual was philosophizing on and on, the words droning from his mouth and wafting away on the air . . . and Swan remained sitting in his tent, continuing the day's work as usual, his long elegant fingers turning over the pages of letters and documents, signing this, handing back that, receiving a flower, opening a gift from a devotee, smiling sweetly at this person, casting a loving look at that person, signalling subtly to another to bring something or take something away – all with such calm gentle ease; every movement was beautiful to watch.

Soon I forgot the philosopher's monotonous drone and allowed my mind to go blank, to float off into the blue space of the sky, lulled by nature's song. At the same time I was focusing on the symbol sitting before me in the tent and began to drink in its grace and poise. I was becoming lost in this contemplation when suddenly he gave me a penetratingly inquisitive look and said, 'Isn't it Vibhooti?' I had no idea to what he was referring. Isn't it what? Isn't what what? Had I missed something? It made no sense to me at all!

Then the strangest thing happened. I was suddenly in Rikhia observing Sri Swamiji tending his dhuni; I had somehow been transported in space (but not in time) to the akhara where I could hear my guru cough as he squatted beside his dhuni in his black kaupeen, a white scarf tied around his face to protect him from the smoke and ashes. But, even stranger was the fact that, at the same time Swan was sitting in his tent right before my eyes. I had never left Ganga Darshan and yet I was fully present in Rikhia! I was viewing both these great souls at the same time even though they were separated by a distance of almost one hundred miles. How could it be? How could I be in two places at once? When I came back to single awareness I naturally doubted the experience I had just had so I asked the person next to me the time. The event had occurred at exactly the time Sri Swamiji tended his dhuni. This brought it home to me with increasing conviction that, although Swan and Sri Swamiji are separate bodies living miles apart they function as, and are, One.

So many small incidents like this happened to reassure that, although Sri Swamiji had physically left the ashram he was absolutely present in the form of Swan. Still, one more reminder was necessary to drive the point home to me.

When Sri Swamiji left Munger, from time to time Swan was called to him and he would come back with the latest directions and inspiring messages from Sri Swamiji and news of what he was doing. Every time he returned there would be a marked change in him. He was noticeably fuller, stronger and richer, you could even say he was becoming more and more complete. One morning, unknown to me, he had just come back from Rikhia



and I was coming down in the lift. When I reached the ground floor he was waiting to get in the lift. I turned to look at him and there I saw, not the face of Swami Niranjan but the clear face of Swami Satyananda flashing back at me. It was as if he had actually turned into Sri Swamiji reminding me once again to look for him in Niranjan.

From these incidents I came to understand and accept that, just as costly perfume can be transferred from one bottle to another when the original bottle is becoming old or cracked, similarly the spirit, the power or divine force of the guru is gradually poured into his chosen disciple at the appropriate time. The guru parampara flows on from bottle to bottle like the teldhara (constant flow of oil) in a

yajna which represents the continuous and unbroken flow of consciousness.

Swan always moved among us like a gentle breeze, pervading and transforming everything he touched. He worked and played with us, laughed and sang with us, talked with us and sometimes chided us as if he was one of us, but he was definitely not 'of' us. He is a divine soul called down by Sri Swamiji to carry on his mission, to guide us, uplift us and inspire us. When he walks around the ashram now he has the presence of one who is totally detached from all around him, who constantly roams in the realms of Brahman, who has surrendered himself completely to his guru, and who lives only to serve others."

How the guru can transfer his consciousness to that of the receptive disciple is borne out by this little story Swami Satyadharama shares with us.

Transmission

"I remember Swami Niranjan from the early days at the old ashram. He was sixteen years old the first time I saw him, tall and gangly, with a boyish smile, a joke on his lips and a twinkle in his eyes. He lived abroad at the different Satyananda Ashrams most of the time, and would come to Munger whenever Swamiji called him. I was fairly new in the ashram then and Swamiji had just made me editor of the Yoga journal. He had also appointed a Swedish girl, Nirvikalpa, as assistant editor. She was also sixteen years old and very bright. At that time we used to do all the writing and editing for the books and journals in the library itself, and Swami Shankardevananda was the librarian.

So, in walked Swami Niranjan. After a few fisticuffs with Shankardevananda, he asked confidently, jangling the keys, 'Where are the Hindi almirahs?' They were immediately pointed out to him and he opened them. Without another word he began to extract all the files and go through them one by one. At that point I did not know who he was and wondered why he was going through all the Hindi files without permission. I remember thinking, 'I hope he doesn't take my keys and go through my almirahs like that. Who does he think he is anyway? He acts as if he owns the place.' It turned out that Sri Swamiji had made him the chief editor of Yoga Vidya for the period of his visit.

The next day Sri Swamiji called me and explained his plan, which I was not to divulge to anyone. He had decided to perform an experiment, this time using the sixteen-year-old Swami Niranjan and the sixteen-year-old Nirvikalpa as subjects. He had spoken to each of them separately, and asked them to write a series of stories for the Yoga and Yoga Vidya journals. He did not specify the subject or theme of the stories, which they were to write, just that they should begin writing and he would read their finished material after two weeks.

Sri Swamiji wanted to see if he could transmit the same stories mentally to both of them, one writing the themes in English and the other in Hindi, without either of them knowing what the other was writing or that it was actually coming from him. So, the two of them began to write furiously, but they would always write separately, Nirvikalpa in the library and Swami Niranjan outside somewhere on the lawn or in Sri Swamiji's room. They never spoke to one another or became friends. They were both asked to write at the same time in the day for two hours.

After two weeks the stories of Swami Niranjan in Hindi and Nirvikalpa in English were typed and handed in to Sri Swamiji. As he read through them, he smiled. Both of the stories were exactly identical in content and theme, word for word, as if translated one from the other. Sri Swami's experiment had succeeded. He had transmitted the same stories to these two bright and receptive young minds and they were able to receive and reproduce the exact same content in English and Hindi mediums at the same time. Later he handed the stories over to be published in the Yoga and Yoga Vidya journals. No translations were needed."

My companion with the questioning mind said, "Well, you have explained how those living in India, and the disciples at Ganga Darshan were able to appreciate Sri Swamiji's journey of the soul, and take refuge in Swami Niranjan as guru. But how about Sri Swamiji's disciples who were living overseas? Even though he had been telling them of his intentions since 1983, and then had stopped his overseas tours, weren't they still stunned to hear that Sri Swamiji had simply walked out of Ganga Darshan for unknown destinations? You have shown me the views of people who came regularly to Munger or knew Swami Niranjan, but what about the people who had never even made a pilgrimage to Ganga Darshan, had never met Swami Niranjan and yet felt internally committed? I've heard they were sent the message that Sri Swamiji had renounced being a guru, that they were not to disturb him in any way."

I had met people who had not been able to understand Sri Swamiji's decision, so I took my time answering.



"Maybe some had not realized to what depth Sri Swamiji's commitment to his new life, and his renunciation of his old life, reached.

"I suppose there was a feeling in the West that he had gone 'on holiday' and would be back soon. But in India there is a long-standing tradition of going to living centres of spiritual energy which are usually marked by temples, a natural formation, or are associated with the life-stories of avatars or saints. The effect on those who visit these places has to be experienced to be believed. Sri Swamiji's Indian devotees understood the significance of all the places he visited as sites of pilgrimage, and the importance of pilgrimage itself. But in many western communities, the spiritual purification given by sacred places is

not understood, and people don't comprehend the point of the tapasya involved in visiting them.

"As devotees from different countries with different cultures had adopted, primarily, a personal approach to their guru and sannyasa, some took Sri Swamiji leaving his former sphere of existence to heart. Swamiji responded by once more explaining clearly the endeavour which Swami Satyananda was engaged in and called on people to share in that inspiration and yet take responsibility for their own lives."

From the desk of Swami Niranjan, September 1989

"There are many different stages in the life of a sannyasin. First he builds an ashram in one place and serves; this is one stage.



Then he abandons the ashram and his working place; this is the second stage. At first he works with a limited group and then, having been united with the universal consciousness, he works to achieve a universal aim, leaving the limited group. This higher state is traditionally called kshetra sannyasa. The aim of Sri Swamiji in leaving the ashram over a year ago was not merely to visit different teerthas, sacred places, but because he had decided to take kshetra sannyasa.

In accordance with Swami Sivananda's instructions, when Sri Swamiji started the work of spreading yoga he had to stop his sadhana for some time in order to make yoga available for all. The first instruction Sri Swamiji received from Swami Sivananda was to serve. When free from the bondage of karma, that is, when all the inner samskaras are burnt, then sadhana begins.

I had an opportunity to live with Sri Swamiji from 5th to 11th August in Trayambakeshwar. He was living in a small room, eight feet by eight feet, which he cleaned himself. He slept on the floor, spreading a mat, he took only sprouted mung for lunch and brahma khichari for dinner, which he prepared himself. There was no running water or electricity. He did not even meet with anyone. He was totally absorbed in sadhana, observing complete silence the whole day.



Sri Swamiji has said that a time must come in our lives when remembrance of the Name goes on with total awareness. It should not be like ajapa japa where unconscious repetition of the mantra takes place; this japa should be continuous with total awareness. Sri Swamiji told me the only aim of his sadhana is unbroken repetition of Name. If he can be aware of Name even in the dissipated state of mind, then the perception of anahata nada will arise.

However, during this period when the guru's consciousness is directed towards the universal or cosmic dimension, the disciples still wish to meet him at their level of consciousness. This causes disturbances in his sadhana. Therefore, Sri Swamiji does not tell anyone where he is and what he is doing. He will continue his sadhana and austere life, not for one or two

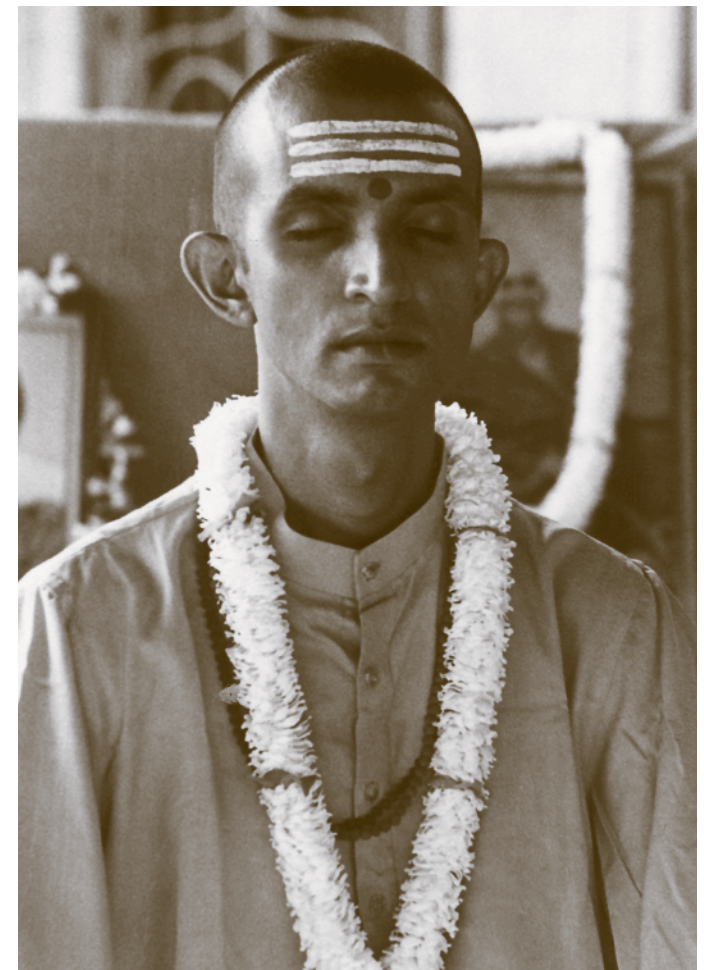


years, but for a long period of time. The state which he aims to achieve is total merging with the soul, atma, without leaving the physical body.

Disciples should not think emotionally about how Sri Swamiji cooks his own food and cleans his room himself. Instead they should think about how they can help him to achieve his aim. As disciples we must follow his instructions word for word. He has given us many instructions, but we only follow those which appeal to us and forget about the others, claiming that we will do it when some inner inspiration comes. This is hypocrisy. It becomes meaningless to be a disciple if we follow the guru's instructions in this way because of our ignorance. If we tread the path of ignorance and think we are doing what is right then such a person will

ever remain backward in life. Now you have to decide which path to choose for yourself."

I don't know how Swami Nirnanjan must have felt at that time. On the one hand inspired by the humility, courage and commitment of his guru, who still saw himself as disciple; on the other hand confronted by broken-hearted people, either in person, by letter, or on the phone who could not rise to the vision of what was actually happening and instead saw a spiritual adventure destined to inspire a whole generation as a personal tragedy for themselves. In the middle of this he had to deal with the actual load of day-to-day responsibilities for BSY, SM, YRF, IYFM and the Indian and overseas centres – in between journeys around India either to accompany his guru and learn the new teachings, or to conduct seminars himself and so forth.



Whatever he had that was personal would, I suppose, have been sacrificed at that time, both externally and internally. He would have had no time for unreality, and maybe that is the tapasya which leads to the state of a paramahansa. For, the experiences and instructions that Swami Nirnanjan received during this time culminated in Sri Swamiji bestowing the paramahansa initiation on him. He became Paramahansa Nirnanjananda at midnight on 31st December in the cremation ground of Sati at Sri Panchdashnam Paramahansa Alakh Bara in Rikhiapeeth.

Bhakti Yoga

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Bhakti yoga is generally defined as the yoga of devotion, adoration and contemplation. Somewhere, the idea of worship and communion with God has overlapped with the concept of bhakti yoga. However, if we look at the classical texts and the scriptural references, then bhakti yoga does not mean devotion, but a process of personal, psychological, intellectual and emotional transformation, moving from a tamasic state of existence to a higher, purer state of existence.

The first meaning of bhakti in the dictionary is separation. Adoration is not defined as bhakti, worship is not defined as bhakti. Separation is defined as bhakti. The twelfth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* is the clearest definition of bhakti yoga that has ever been presented. It predates every religious, moral and ethical belief of the present-day religious traditions. And there is no reference to devotion and worship in it. The entire subject of the chapter is about finding one's balance and equilibrium. Sri Krishna has given twenty items in which that balance has to be discovered and lived. Verses 18-19 list the qualities and state of mind of the *bhakta*, devotee or aspirant:

*Samaha shatrau cha mitre cha tathaa
maanaapamaanayoho
Shitoshnasukhaduhkeshu samah sangavivarjitaha.
Tulyanindaastutirmauni santushto ena kenachit
Aniketah sthiramatirbhaktimaanme priyo naraha.*

One who is the same with friend and foe, in honour and dishonour, balanced in heat and cold, pleasure and pain, and is free from attachment, to whom praise and reproach are equal, who is silently contemplative,

content with anything, unattached to home, steady-minded and full of devotion – that person is dear to Me.

This is the concept of bhakti yoga that is ingrained in India and the yogic culture. We call worship *aradhana*, not bhakti yoga. We call mantra repetition and other practices *upasana*, not bhakti yoga. Bhakti yoga is a process of inner transformation.



To become a *bhakta* or a sattwic being, the first condition is to overcome the dual mentality. The ability to see oneness in everything and the inner nature of all beings is the first attainment of bhakti yoga. The second and third attainments are friendliness and compassion for all. The fourth is overcoming the selfish nature, the arrogance and rigidity of the ego, and developing a selfless nature.

Sri Rama described nine forms of bhakti 10,000 years ago. The first form is keeping company with positive, pious and good people, and shunning the company of those who are negative and crooked. Rama also clarified the difference between a good and a bad person. The pious are those who 'take away your heart and mind upon separation'. It means there is so much identification and oneness with them that you feel, "We are two bodies but with one mind and one spirit." The crooked, by contrast, are those who bring suffering and pain, who can influence you and make you weak due to negative thinking, behaviour and attitudes.

In the *Ramacharitamanas*, the first form of bhakti is opening the mental doors to new ideas which can uplift you. It is being open, receptive and understanding. Associating with the virtuous can help to uplift your nature, whether it is a person, an idea, a thought or an action. This is called *satsang*, in company of truth.

There is a sutra in the *Yoga Sutras* of Rishi Patanjali which indicates how a person should relate with another person – with *maitri*, *karuna*, *mudita*, *upeksha*. Be friendly with those who are happy and content. Be compassionate towards those who are in pain and suffering. Be happy for those who are pious and virtuous. And reject from your life the crooked people, even though they may be your dear ones. When you are friendly with those who are happy, you also become happy. If you are friendly with those who are negative, you become negative. Be joyous for those who are pious and virtuous – at least be happy that someone else has become what you are not. And if you are jealous, use the power of jealousy to improve yourself. And for the crooked, there is no compassion or friendship. You should have the courage and the wisdom to distance yourself from even those who are dear to you if they are negative and crooked.

So, this is the sutra which defines association and indicates the beginning of bhakti yoga. Another example of bhakti is diverting the mind from external, sensual and sensorial involvement and fixing it in the higher awareness. The third form of bhakti is becoming egoless, not by subjecting yourself to situations where you begin to think that you no longer have an ego, but by working with your own personality. Bhakti gradually develops in this way.

Now, is this devotion, or is it taking positive charge of your life? Bhakti yoga means to improve the quality of life, the behaviour and thinking patterns, to enhance the sattwic and creative abilities. It is the yoga of inner transformation. It is not the yoga of chanting God's name in a foreign language, which is how many people define it. It is the yoga of sublimating the gross nature and attaining a harmonious, sattwic nature.

Now, the first meaning of bhakti is 'separate yourself'. Separate yourself from what? And connect with what? Normally, all our emotions are directed out in the world. When you connect the same emotion with your inner nature, it takes the form of bhakti. At this time a separation or disconnection takes place from the external, material attachments and associations, and you internalize your awareness and vision. So this separation from the world and connection with the inner nature is the aim of bhakti. Separation from the world takes place by becoming aware of your association, *sambandh*, and connection with the inner spirit takes place when you cultivate *atmabhava*. According to Sri Swamiji, this is the pathway of bhakti. The final attainment is *atmabhava*, ability to see oneself in everything.

In bhakti yoga you develop the ability to see the existence of the universal spirit in everyone. Now, when you look at a person you see either beauty or ugliness; one

person may have a gentle, peaceful, vibrant and attractive nature and another may seem disturbed and dissipated. But when you are able to see the spark of divinity in each one, you no longer focus on the body, colour, age, gender, mind, culture or religion. What is perceived is the spark of the divine spirit.

With these basic precepts, the concept of bhakti developed, but in the course of time, different systems and traditions incorporated the idea of bhakti in their fold. Therefore, there is a religious definition of bhakti. Religions



incorporated certain principles of bhakti so that bhakti became religious in nature at one point of time. There is a psychological definition of bhakti because bhakti is actually an experience of the inner transformation that one is going through. There is the cultural component of bhakti. In India, for example, prior to the arrival of media and television, the only forms of music in the whole country were bhajan, kirtan and folk. People of different denominations, traditions, beliefs and languages, were all united in this cultural identification of bhakti.

So, from the religious perspective, bhakti became the means of contemplation and adoration, whether the object of contemplation was a deity, guru or God. Religions had their basic philosophy, but different systems were taken from bhakti to define with greater clarity the role that religion plays in a person's life. At that time, bhakti came into religion and become the yoga of devotion. But from an individual perspective, bhakti is a process of psychological transformation and it takes you through nine different stages of transformation, which are known as *navadha bhakti*, the nine-fold path.

These aspects have to be seen from a clear perspective to understand bhakti. Otherwise, in the name of bhakti we tend to mix all these components and create confusion in our own mind. Yoga deals with the personal transformative aspect of bhakti, the nine stages of internal, emotional purification. That is what we are concerned about in our yogic journey.

Eventually, if we want to discover and enlighten our own natures, then bhakti is the way, not jnana yoga, raja yoga or karma yoga. In hatha yoga you only require your body, in jnana yoga you only require your intellect, in karma yoga you require the senses and in raja yoga you require the mind. But in bhakti yoga, the lifestyle, behaviour, thinking patterns, intellect, feelings, emotions and social performance are all involved. To perfect bhakti yoga, everything, the lifestyle and the individual, have to come together. And in such a state of harmony the energy of the transcendental force begins to flow in an individual being. That is the perfection of bhakti yoga. Ultimately, as a process of personal growth and evolution, we will come to the state of bhakti in the course of time. Bhakti is the natural expression of harmony of the spirit, and this is what we all aspire for in the process of our evolution. Moving from the ridiculous to the sublime, that is bhakti yoga. ॐ



January

From the 6th to 8th, Swami Nirnanjan presided over a seminar in Bhubaneshwar. At the three-day convention he spoke on 'Spiritual Education', 'The Philosophy of Mantra' and 'The Traditional and Scientific Basis of Hatha Yoga'. He lectured at the Orissa University of Agricultural Technology and at the National Aluminium Co., Bhubaneshwar. At the Ruchita School he inspired the children to start practising yoga.

February

Swami Kaivalyananda conducted a yoga seminar in Rajnandgaon, followed by yoga seminars in Kolkata and Dhanbad.

A series of seminars were conducted in Mumbai, Barauni, the Bina Project, NCL, Mathura, and Kolkata by BSY swamis.

A seminar was conducted by Swamis Anandananda and Gurupooja at the Satyanandashram, Torino, Italy.

March

At Ganga Darshan, Swami Nirnanjan guided the Sivaratri celebrations.

On the 31st, he inaugurated the Adarsh Mahavidyalaya and the Little Flower School in Jamalpur, Munger, and the Commercial College at Heru Diyara, Munger.

From 27th March to 4th April, Navaratri anushtana was conducted by Swami Nirnanjan. Swamiji was the chief guest at the first scientific workshop at the Railway Medical Society, Eastern Railway, Jamalpur.

April

Swami Nirnanjan was called to Sri Panchdashnam Paramahansa Alakh Bara in Deoghar and received the instruction to devote his time to tasks that were set for him as a Paramahansa.

The YRF team held:

A Yoga Asthma Study Camp at Dallia Rajhara (MP) from the 1st to 20th.

From the 21st to 28th, the first follow-up camp in Raipur, where the YRF team continued to collect data.

From 11th to 30th May, a specialized yoga course for asthmatics was conducted.

Similar protocol was followed in courses conducted from the 11th to 30th in July and October.

May

The 'Symposium on Health', organized by Swami Atmananda from BSY, Singapore, attracted many international speakers and guests, including Swami Yogabhakti from France, Swami Anandananda from Italy and Dr Swamis Vivekananda, Karmananda and Shankardevananda from Australia.

Swami Kriyananda and swamis from Atmadarshan ashram, Bangalore, conducted a Teacher Training Course in May, a yoga



program for the staff of MGDM Hospital, Kangzha, Kerala, in July, a preliminary Kriya Yoga Course, and a special program for the elderly in Kottiyam, Kerala, during August. In September they held a yoga retreat in the hills at Kodi Kanal, a yoga therapy program in Chennai, and in October a course in antar mouna.

July

From July onwards Ganga Darshan closed its doors to visitors from India and overseas.

On the 7th, Guru Poornima was termed 'Darshan Poornima' and thousands flocked to Sri Panchdashnam Paramahansa Alakh Bara in Deoghar for a glimpse of Sri Swamiji living the lifestyle of a tapasvi paramahansa.

Swami Sivamurti, from Satyananda Ashrams, Greece, conducted

'wandering seminars' in Ipiros. In August she conducted a 'wandering seminar' in Turkey.

August

Swami Kaivalyananda conducted seminars in CCWO, Dhanbad, Nasik, Rajkot, Anjar and Ahmedabad in August and during September in Bhuj, Mandvi, Baroda, Halol and for the Pune Yoga Mitra Mandal. In October he conducted yoga seminars in Telco, Pune, at the Prem Puri Ashram and Dadar in Mumbai as well as at the Bhopal Yoga Mitra Mandal, and during November in Amlohri, NCL and Singrauli.

September

On the anniversary of Sri Swamiji's sannyasa initiation, a training course was commenced in Satyanandashram, Greece.

Swami Anandananda met all affiliated yoga teachers and karma sannyasins in Italy in order to coordinate programs and research work in different centres.

October–November

In October the swamis of Sambalpur ashram conducted an asthma camp and a Teacher Training Course. In November they held a camp for digestive problems and a diabetes camp.

Two programs were conducted by Dr Swami Shankardevananda and Swami Anandananda at the Torino and Trieste Yoga Centres, Italy. In November they conducted a residential seminar at the Montescudo country ashram.

Swami Anandananda, Swami Shaktidhara and Ishananda conducted seminars for school teachers in Italy.



In January, Sri Swamiji called the residents of Ganga Darshan to the newly-formed Alakh Bara where he had pitched his tent. For most of us this was the first meeting since Guru Poornima 1988. For those trusting Swami Niranjan's advice the message had simply been that for the true disciple, the connection is cosmic, internal and completely independent of physical circumstance, so we should respect Sri Swamiji's wish to be alone.

It was, therefore, a stunning experience to step from a bus purported to be travelling elsewhere and to see our guru seated in a tent awaiting us, and to know that he had called us. His eyes and body glowed, his hair and beard were long, he had renounced the geru dhoti and wore only a kaupin, and revolved a small crystal and coral mala in one hand.

He raised his hand and said 'Namo Narayana', and instructed us to use that mantra. However, we were not allowed to touch his feet, and his message was clear and unequivocal: we were not to disturb him on any level – neither by coming nor sending letters, neither hanging on to him emotionally, nor trying to influence him in any way. This was the message he gave to us that day.

Namo Narayana

"I have called you all to tell you not to come again unless I call you. This is Paramahansa Akhara; it is not an ashram. Akhara is only for sadhana and no karma, no prepared food, only bhiksha. Akhara is a tradition, like Niranjani, Nirvani. This is Paramahansa Akhara and Swami Sivananda is the devata.

Now this Akhara is under construction. After finishing the work, nobody will stay here except me and my black dog. Dog is the vehicle of Bhairava. The Akhara building is for naga sannyasins only. They can stay here only for three days; they will prepare food with their own hands. My disciple, Swami Atmananda, is giving up everything, all her accomplishments, and is coming to join me.

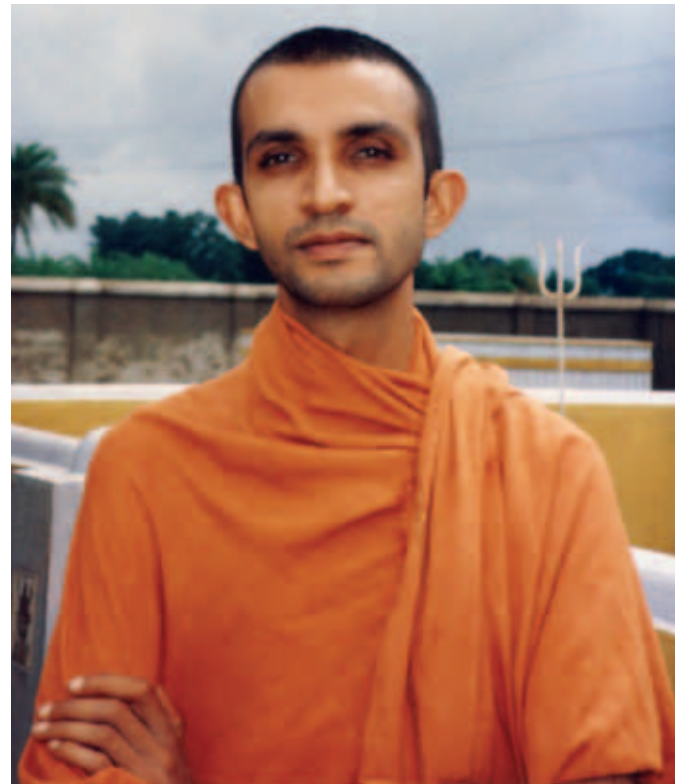
I will stay here, have two flags, black and geru. When the black flag is hoisted no one can enter. It may be for one, two or three days' duration. It means nobody should come. When the geru flag is raised, it means the line is clear, we can meet. Soon I will light the dhuni of this place and on that very day I will renounce my last cloth also.

When the moment of my death comes I will not just die surrounded by doctors, devotees and transfusions; I will go consciously, straight through brahmandra. I will die in samadhi, and if I am born again it will be in a family of yogis. Don't come asking; you can be proud of me. When you have finished with your work and desires and your name and fame, you can come here, not before. Even the desire for samadhi has to come from within, like it did for me.

It is necessary to transcend all desires, even for moksha. Sannyasins are individuals. They should have no emotional attachments to each other or to anything. They should be able to stand alone, independent.

I can only say that God has helped me. Nothing is my desire, it is His. God has been very good to me. He has given me so much help. He has given me everything. I have not had to go through crises like others. No, he simply gave me the best disciple – Swami Niranjan. He makes his own decisions. He doesn't have to ask. Now whatever happens will be because He wants it."

Those of us who had darshan at that time realized that Sri Swamiji was totally dedicated to this new endeavour and resolved to put aside our personal demands. His message and the news of our visit was printed in the Yoga and Yoga Vidya magazines so that, as per his instructions, all his devotees around India and the world would know. Swami Niranjan also explained the new circumstances through a published message.



From the desk of Swami Niranjan, January 1990

"I was recalled to India by Sri Swamiji in 1983 to assume the Presidency of BSY. On that very day of 19th January, when I reached Munger, Sri Swamiji said to me, 'I have called you here to take over the entire work of BSY and all that I have created, and to succeed me in every way. My role here is over. There are other horizons beckoning me and I must go.'

Of course his words brought tears to my eyes then, as they do now, because I did not want to lose him, but I understood that Sri Swamiji's role is more universal, and for this, we may have to lose his physical presence. However, I did take the liberty of asking him to stay at Munger a bit longer if only to be physically present to guide and inspire me, as I had been away from him almost since my childhood. To this he agreed and as you well know, he remained in Munger until 1988.

1988 came, and he once again started speaking of his plans to go away. This he mentioned both publicly in his satsangs as well as privately to his disciples. Of course, he always did say, 'My departure will be sudden and I will leave as I came, with only one jhola!' Many did not believe this would ever happen and overlooked it, and many of us secretly prayed that it may never happen. But true to his word, on 8th August 1988, Sri Swamiji bade farewell to BSY, to Munger and to all that he had created in the short span of twenty years.

Since then newsletters, describing his experiences at the places he has been visiting, have served as a window into the present life of Sri Swamiji, offering us a glimpse of the direction in which he is heading. One thing is clear from them, Sri Swamiji is now completely and totally surrendering himself to the Divine Will. His life as we have seen it earlier, had been an expression of that too; but now his aim is total surrender, even to the extent of giving up food, clothing and shelter if that be His will. He meets no one, eats once a day, a sparse meal, cooks for himself, lives anywhere in any mud hut offered to him, and is forever lost in naam smaran, remembering the name of God.

I have had the good fortune to have his darshan four times since he left. At Baidyanath Dham he broke the news to me that he was definitely now on a new path and his return to Munger in the role of a guru, was impossible. At the Kumbha Mela he spoke of now living the life of a Paramahansa Naga as that was the initiation he received from Swami Sivanandaji. At Rishikesh and Gangotri where he was lost in an inner vision and told me of his last visit to Gangotri in 1956 when he had taken the sankalpa of making me his successor, four years prior to my birth. And finally

at his mud hut in Trayambakeshwar where, without his saying anything, I myself knew that the bird had finally left the cage.

The transformation is unbelievable, but the change is so natural and spontaneous that one is left feeling that this too is an aspect of the divinity which Sri Swamiji had shown us in so many ways. Perhaps all this is a bit strange for us because no sannyasi or mahatma within our living experience has taken such



a step; but we only have to look into the scriptures to know that the path Sri Swamiji has chosen to tread is the same one that the great mahatmas such as Sukadeva, Adi Shankaracharya, Dattatreya, Mahavir and other paramahamsas have chosen for themselves.

Since taking over the work I have always endeavoured to shoulder the institutional responsibility myself, leaving Sri

Swamiji free for the greater mission that he is destined for. Now, more than ever, I strongly feel that Sri Swamiji's path should no longer be restricted or hindered in any way by any of us, neither by emotional attachments nor personal needs for which we may want to approach him. His destiny is that of one who can create the universal vision and we should consider ourselves privileged to support him in whatever way we can, for through that association we ourselves can be raised spiritually.

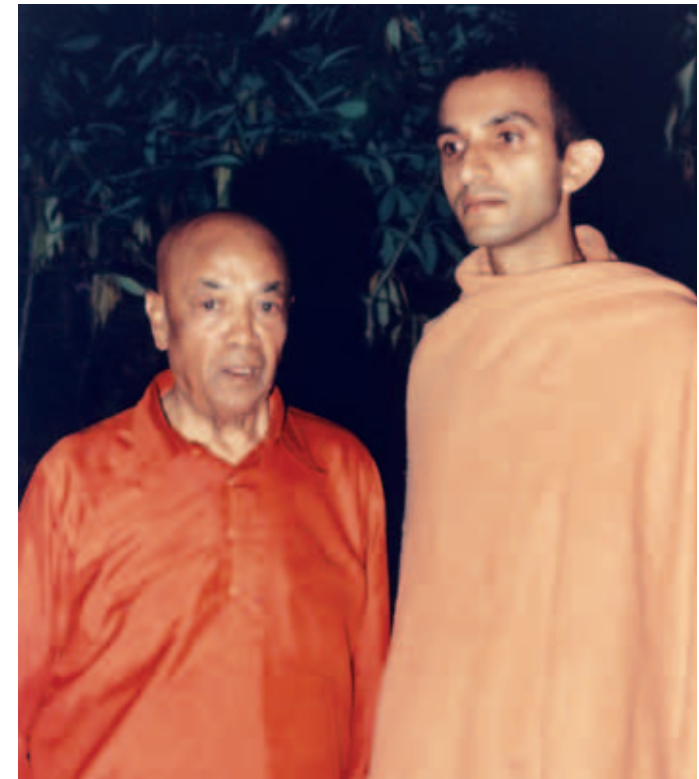
Therefore, it is my request to all householders, devotees, disciples, karma sannyasins, friends and well-wishers that they should not try to find out where Sri Swamiji stays or try to meet him unless he calls them. And to all sannyasins I say, prepare yourself for the work which lies ahead and try to emulate the example which has been set before you by our beloved Sri Swamiji. Yes, the bird has truly flown and no cage nor shutter can hold him now."

A group of us were sitting quietly when the young seeker posed another question. "We heard that after being initiated as a paramahansa at midnight on the last night of 1989, Swami Niranjan began his sadhana as directed by his guru. What does this mean?"

I hesitated to answer. After all, who knows what is taking place between guru and disciple, especially if we are speaking of paramahamsas, who are spoken of in the Upanishads as being most rare and completely free. Just as the mantra or sadhana that we are given by our guru is private, and not to be discussed with others, so the paramahansa sadhana is privately given from guru to disciple. We can only see the effects of the sadhana on the external plane, and that also, only according to our range of vision.

"I don't know about the sadhana," I said finally, "but the practical results are pretty awe-inspiring. During the early part of this year, the calls for the services of the swamis and the ashram in helping people working for a more yogic society, continued to increase. There was a busy schedule planned for the various institutions Swamiji was guiding. Business interests,

medical practitioners, educational institutions, government bodies and spiritual organizations from all around the world were calling repeatedly for seminars, workshops and classes. Swamiji was in great demand and began a long and busy program in Bihar and Orissa. He had planned other programs around India, a Yoga Celebration in Australia and a gathering in Singapore arranged by Swami Atmananda, but all these events took place independently.



At the same time there was a strong current building within the ashram towards training and a re-examination of the values and aims of sannyasa. People were increasingly attracted to Ganga Darshan at that time and many who did manage to come as visitors were inspired to start a long association with Swamiji. Swamis Shrutigyana, Yogagyanam and Vivekmurti from Bulgaria were some such people. Swami Shrutigyana, your story first."



The guiding light

"This is a time when I am living the last part of my life. A time when I spontaneously review the years that have passed and realize that I can only grasp and remember the last twenty. Because the light streaming out of them is blinding the memories from before. For me, these are the only twenty years of real life, when I met and started to live under the wing and guidance of my guru – Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati.

Only after I had met my guru I realized that all the pains and troubles which we go through in life are actually a true blessing in order to find a guru – the most important thing in one's life.

I had been interested in yoga since I was very young and read books about the lives of many yogis, but thought that such an



ordinary person like me could ever meet such a divine master. In 1985, I went to Africa with the idea of working to gain some money so that eventually I could travel to India. There I received a boon from a friend, I was given A Systematic Course in the Ancient Tantric Techniques of Yoga and Kriya, by Swami Satyananda. The moment I held the book in my hands, even without opening it, I felt a strong vibration like electricity passing through me and it was quite clear that this was the right direction for my future journey. Every phrase I read in it was drawing me towards something new, but for which I had longed for many years. With this firm belief, I started practising according to the book's lessons.

I learned about karma sannyasa for the first time in the Greek ashram, and it was a great joy for me when I received

confirmation from Munger that I could come for initiation. At that time, for us to receive permission to travel abroad meant going through innumerable difficulties, but in my case everything was arranged with striking ease. At the same time I was very confident that I knew many things about yoga, and of my strong willpower and stable character. That's why when I decided to go and visit the ashram in Munger for the first time, I was sure that nothing could influence and change me without my knowing. That was at the beginning of 1990. At that time I didn't know anything about Swami Niranjan.

When I arrived in the ashram yard, I saw a charming young boy playing with a dog. I was very surprised when a few hours later this same boy welcomed us in the kutir as 'Swamiji'. He was behaving with a natural simplicity, speaking and communicating with such confidence and power that from the very beginning I felt as if I was losing the ground under my feet.

My confusion was even greater when two days later, I was initiated into karma sannyasa. For the first time in my life I was part of such a ritual. I saw Swamiji in a totally new light – as a stately saint engrossed in a sacred ritual, who is at a level of consciousness completely different from ours. At this moment I realized that I am entering a new world where I have to learn everything from scratch.



My surprise was even greater when without a warning Swamiji postponed my flight back to Bulgaria by an entire month. I couldn't believe that this was happening, and I could not react because shortly afterwards I fell very ill and could neither think nor control myself. In the next ten days my condition worsened and I couldn't even rise from the bed. The other residents in the ashram were extremely nice and took care of me. In the next few days I had a real emotional breakdown. I thought to myself that if I succeed in getting out of this place, I will never come back. I was angry that someone was interfering with my life in such an abrupt way.

When I came back home, I felt changed. I discovered that my home was no longer 'my promised land'. My mind wasn't obeying me and my heart was drawing me back to Munger. After all the internal resistance, I went back to Munger again in 1993. I participated in a six-month sannyasa course led by Swami Niranjan.

It was a time of such intense experiences and revelations, a time which words can hardly describe. It was a unique chance to live in the presence and guidance of Swamiji and to witness a living example of perfection manifesting at every moment. Swamiji's way of teaching us was incredible. Everything was done jovially and with an ease and goodness. From an emotional point of view, this was one of the most difficult periods of my life.



I was put to a special regime and went through severe trials for which I wasn't prepared.

During this period and some years afterwards, Swamiji didn't utter a single word to me. He was very polite, responsive and talkative to all others in the ashram. Every night I cried bitterly and made plans how in the morning I would gather my luggage and go home. I thought that Swamiji did not want me. To my great surprise when getting up in the morning – exactly the opposite happened.

That whole time I was trying to find some fault with my guru. But the more I concentrated on his personality, the more I realized his boundless perfection. I was shaken by the fact that there wasn't a single part of me which was inaccessible to Swamiji. There was no place to hide.

I realized that what I had been looking for my whole life was now standing in front of me. I decided to surrender and change direction – to try to do and show the best of me. This approach also turned out impossible. Although I thought that I knew how to control myself, to my great surprise, unexpected negative qualities appeared on the surface. Again I was helpless in front of Swamiji's power. At that moment I understood that



no matter how much one tries to change oneself, it is impossible to achieve that without guru's interference. The only thing that I did and still do is to inwardly and unceasingly pray to him to forgive my imperfections and remain my guiding light forever. Everything that happens on the outside is nothing compared to the incredible romance which the soul experiences when in contact with guru."

"Vivekmurti, you were the third member of the group from Bulgaria. How did the experience unfold for you?"

Unexpected surprises

"For several years I had been interested in yoga. I had read some books and gone to a few hatha yoga classes taught by different teachers, but I felt something was missing. In the books and in the classes there seemed to be a preoccupation with the physical body. Then I came across Swami Satyananda's books and was very impressed by them, especially by the way that he explained ancient truths in a language understandable to the western mind, brought up to accept only scientifically proven facts. It became clear that yoga was not an ancient myth buried in a mystical maze, but it was something real and alive and waiting to be picked up by anyone who cared.



After two visits to Satyananda Ashram, Greece, I took the first opportunity to come to Munger with the intention of becoming a karma sannyasin.

It would be interesting to note here the miraculous way in which all the formalities concerning the trip, passports, visas, tickets, etc. were arranged. Someone, unseen by us was helping us from somewhere. When we arrived in India, although we had been warned many times that a lot of unexpected surprises were waiting for inexperienced travellers like us, we felt the protection and assistance of that invisible force every step of the way from the arrival at Kolkata airport right up to stepping out of the taxi in front of the ashram gates.

I knew that Sri Swamiji would not be here and that his disciple, Swami Niranjan was now in charge of the ashram. Not only had I not met Swami Niranjan before, but I knew nothing about him. However, the very fact that Sri Swamiji himself had chosen him as his successor was enough for me to accept him. During the first few days here I had the opportunity to go to a couple of satsangs with him, but to my regret, almost all of the

questions were in Hindi, and the answers were too. Then a few days later our ceremony for karma sannyasa initiation followed and he left the ashram.

After about a week, all of a sudden I saw him, yes it was him, in flesh and blood. He had returned unexpectedly because circumstances had required his presence here. People gathered around him in front of kutir and he began explaining what had happened. Although the story in itself was interesting, the manner in which he told it was so captivating that I was drawn to him like iron filings to a magnet. It was not what he said, but the way he talked, so open, so unconstrained, so close to each one of us, that took hold of me.

I again came to Ganga Darshan for the six-month sannyasa training course and quickly took the opportunity to meet him personally. The meeting didn't last long, but again the impression was strong. I started putting my questions, and he listened with the utmost attention. One could almost think that he was trying to go inside me so as to understand my problem better. And at the end of my monologue he smiled and said, 'Yes, I have noticed that. It will be taken care of and the situation will improve in due time. Don't worry.' And what could be better than to know that your guru knows your problems and has already planned for their removal?



Attending his lectures and satsangs I couldn't help but be impressed by the way he explains things – with simple words and examples from life, so that even the most complicated of topics are easier to understand. It is evident that this ability comes from a deep understanding of the subject, not mere book knowledge, and his marvellous sense of humour makes it much easier for one to relate and feel much closer to him."

Slowly, I resumed, "So we can see that around the world the integrated network inspired by Swamiji was beginning to coordinate and function by itself. In Ganga Darshan ashram also, the focus was increasingly on individual sadhana and a re-examination of the values and aims of sannyasa as Swami Niranjan became less available to the swamis. Increasingly he entered a period of intense study, writing the commentaries on the *shastras*, scriptures, which formed part of the sadhana given to him after his last initiation as paramahansa. An akhara was set up in the grounds of Ganga Darshan with fire pits for havan and a new kutir, cowsheds and an imposing fence around the perimeter to separate this special place from the rest of the ashram."



“So Swami Niranjan also began to withdraw from the ashram?” continued the questioner.

“No, not exactly, it was at this time that he gave a series of lectures on sannyasa which gave us all a new perspective of the tradition into which we had been initiated, and a new inspiration to move forward on that path. The book *Sannyasa Darshan* contains some of the lectures from that time.

“First came the inspiration, then came the practical experience, or the test. During the Navaratri anushthana, Swami Niranjan led the meditations and the chanting of the Ramacharitamayas, conducting classes in japa and trataka.

There was havan, aspirants were given mantra diksha and karma sannyasa and the new akhara was inaugurated.

“From July onwards the gates of the ashram were closed to visitors from India and overseas. Devotees were told not to come for darshan or satsang, nor for the scheduled courses. Most of the resident swamis were sent out from the ashram over the next few months. Once again our self-image and speculations had been crashed. We were thrown back on our own resources and had a chance to practise something of the lifestyle of a parivrajaka. Even those of us who had to return overseas to societies with different laws, customs, tolerances, etc. had the opportunity to practise *viveka*, discrimination,



and *vairagya*, non-attachment, the two wings of sannyasa, in action.

“Moving in society helpfully but without being caught and tamed, trying to float like a lotus without getting wet, many of us became bedraggled, but the Paramahansa sailed on serenely. The commentaries that Swami Niranjan wrote at that time on the *Prashnopanishad*, *Ishavasya Upanishad*, *Gherand Samhita*, the twelfth and fifteenth chapters of the *Bhagavad Gita* and *Purusha Suktam* have already been published. He visited many spiritual leaders, including the Shankaracharya of Sringeri Math. At this time he also made the detailed arrangements for the following year’s sannyasa training course for Indian aspirants.”

Initiation

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Swami Satyananda used to tell a story. A bird was flying over the ocean looking for a place to land. It kept on flying till its wings became tired, but it did not find land. Suddenly, its eyes fell on a piece of driftwood floating on the surface of the ocean. The bird landed on the driftwood to rest, and after it had rested it again began searching for land. But this time it made sure that it always had the driftwood within sight. Whenever it became tired of flying, it would land on the driftwood to rest.

We can apply this example in our own spiritual journey as well. After we have performed our asana and pranayama, the physical practices of yoga, and internalized ourselves to discover our inner nature, we need to have a point of reference. This is where initiation plays an important part.

Initiation is not a membership to an organization or an elite club. In Sanskrit, the word for initiation is *diksha*, which comes from the root *drik*, meaning to see or perceive. Therefore, *diksha* means developing the ability to perceive and know oneself.

Spiritual life does not begin until one is initiated. No amount of meditation, asana and pranayama, doing the right thing at the right time or religious discipline can provide the passport to spiritual life. In the traditions it has been very clearly stated that spiritual sadhana is not realized or fructified until one is initiated. There is a reason for this. Without initiation anything that you do only follows the whims of the mind: 'I am inclined to this meditation, so I do it. I am not inclined to that meditation so I ignore it.' These mental traits and whims continue to dictate and guide our so-called spiritual aspirations so that we never come to the dimension where we actually experience spirituality.

The first and foremost *diksha* is mantra *diksha*, and from the yogic perspective it is also the last initiation. The only *diksha*

which yoga recognizes is mantra *diksha*, nothing beyond it and nothing less than it. And mantra sadhana is the biggest sadhana that one can put oneself through. Using the mantra, one internalizes the consciousness, connects with the source of strength within and harmonizes the fluctuations of the psychic centres. When we are dealing with our consciousness, there is no map to guide us through the different states, and therefore



mantra becomes the base from which we take off and to which we return after flying through our consciousness. Mantra is always used at the time of meditation, so there is a link with the vibratory and energy aspect of the self. Consciousness is space and mantra allows us to experience that space, the basis of all creation. Yoga stops there. For a yoga practitioner, mantra sadhana is more than enough.

Mantra sadhana is not just the repetition of a word; it is a very high sadhana. Sri Swamiji says that when he was given the mantra by his guru, he was told to do five malas, and till today he does only five malas. After all, doing even five malas is difficult; one doesn't realize when the mind slips. If you can practise your mantra for even two malas without the mind wavering, without any thought except the mantra, without any focus except the mantra, without any image except the symbol, then you are beginning to perfect mantra sadhana. The fluctuations, the diversions of mind have to stop, and concentration has to develop. Once concentration develops, chanting of just one mantra is enough to hit the bull's eye.

During initiation, people are also given spiritual names. The spiritual name is an aim to follow and attain in life. A name has a relationship with an aspect of your nature and spirit which can be felt intuitively by those who are aware of it. That name represents the need, the aspiration of the human spirit to become and attain that. You have to live, imbibe and express the quality of the name, and that becomes a reminder of your journey through spiritual life. Being in Sanskrit, the name also evokes a particular vibrational response because Sanskrit words are a combination of sounds which create a frequency change in the vibratory aspect of our personality. When we say the name in Sanskrit using a combination of sounds which have the power to harmonize, alter and change the pattern of our vibratory waves, *spandan*, then that quality of spirit is lived. It doesn't only remain an aim to attain, but we become that. So, when people call you by your spiritual name, you hear it like a mantra and begin to identify with it. Therefore, use your spiritual name as much as possible. It can be as powerful as mantra sadhana itself.

The second step of initiation is *jignasu sannyasa*. *Jignasu* means a seeker. The seeker identifies with the spiritual personality. The seeker realizes that there is something within that exists beyond desires, mind, expectations and ego. And

they have to connect with that. The source of strength, security and comfort lies within. The seeker has to now adjust, modify and fine-tune not only the nature and mind, but also lifestyle and routine. So, fine-tuning of lifestyle and routine, and creating different opportunities to experience the spiritual dimension is the aim of the seeker, the jignasu.

The third initiation is karma sannyasa. Approximately five thousand years ago, Sri Krishna created the tradition of karma sannyasa. At that time there was only one form of sannyasa – poorna sannyasa, and spiritual people and materialistic people went their own separate ways. However, Krishna said that the experience of spiritual life is the birthright of everyone. Just as a bird needs two wings, a human being needs two identities, material and spiritual, in order to evolve and succeed in life. Krishna introduced the idea of karma sannyasa, which he describes in the *Bhagavad Gita*. The first karma sannyasin was his friend and disciple, Arjuna, to whom Krishna said, “Your karmas, or actions, must have a purpose. Those actions must be according to law and justice, they must fulfil you and at the same time help others uplift themselves.”

In the twentieth century, Swami Satyananda revived the tradition of karma sannyasa. He said, “Continue to live in your home with your family and job. You don’t have to renounce them to attain a spiritual identity, but identify with your inner nature. When you are with yourself, you are a sannyasin, a person dedicated to the spiritual quest and inner discovery. When you are in society, fulfil all your obligations in the best possible manner and do not ignore or reject any of your duties or commitments.”

For karma sannayasins, action becomes the way to achieve inner purity, it becomes the method by which they can reassess their associations and attachments. Instead of involvement with them, they learn to become participants. When one becomes a participant in the process of life, then one is doing one’s best and yet remaining unaffected by the joys and sorrows. One maintains one’s harmony, balance

and clarity which allow one to move forward. So it is the management of the karmic associations with the world which is the aim of karma sannyasa.

The fourth is poorna sannyasa. This is the lifestyle where you immerse yourself in the discovery of your inner spiritual self and follow the path of surrender. And that experience of personal discovery is applied in outer life, to inspire,



encourage and uplift oneself and also others. The idea is: ‘I am a sannyasin; I am fulfilling my roles, my obligations. I am playing my part in this movie of which I have become the hero. So I must play the part to the best of my ability.’

Thus, the sadhana of a jignasu is of jnana yoga, the sadhana of a karma sannyasin is of karma yoga, and the sadhana of a poorna sannyasin is of bhakti yoga. Jignasu sannyasa, karma sannyasa and poorna sannyasa are all initiations in the path of sannyasa. The word sannyasa comes from *nyasa*, meaning ‘renunciation’, and *sam*, meaning ‘total’. Sannyasa is a tradition

in which you give over everything you possess, your strengths, inspiration, thoughts and convictions, and connect with the higher purpose. Sannyasa initiations are not yoga initiations but lifestyle initiations. They belong to a tradition different from yoga. They are intended to harmonize our lifestyle. We try to understand how we can improve our interactions with life. Here yoga is not perceived as a practice that is performed for a limited time during morning or evening, but becomes a part of one’s life. Every moment you begin to live yoga. That is the intention of sannyasa initiations.

In each initiation, you need to identify with certain qualities within yourself. You have to make the effort to cultivate qualities that can help you to connect with the source. Until you achieve that perfection, do not move to the next stage. If you do so, ultimately you will be duping yourself, as eventually you will have to confront the truth in your life. After initiation, your perceptions have to change. Initiation does not just mean wearing geru and feeling that you are part of an elite club, feeling divine and sublime. You have to make an effort to follow the code of conduct, which will enhance your own sensitivity, receptivity and creativity.

I have sometimes been asked the reason behind the hierarchy in initiations. Well, while in philosophy we are all equal, in reality we have to take one step at a time to come to that experience of equality. There are different levels of maturity. You cannot say that a six-month-old baby is equal to a 50-year old person. So hierarchy comes in naturally, even though you may not want it, because our samskaras, karmas and natures are all different.

If you are true to yourself and committed to your growth in life, you will have to go step by step. The different initiations represent this process: the first step, the second step, the third step and the fourth step. In society, only four steps can be taught. Beyond the fourth, it is personal willpower and force of conviction that takes one further. ॐ



January

A Sannyasa Training Course for Indian nationals was conducted for the whole of this year at Ganga Darshan. The ashram was closed to non-participants for the duration of the course.

BSY's teaching commitments were met by the acharyas of the branch ashrams: Swami Swaroopananda at Satyananda School of Yoga, Bhubaneshwar, Orissa; Swami Asheshananda at Satyadarshan Yogashram, Raipur, MP; Swami Devashankarananda at Gyandarshan Yogashram, Bhilai, MP; Swami Vidyananda at Rajnandgaon, MP; Swami Haripremananda at Satna Yoga School, MP; Swami Kaivalyananda at BSY, Dhanbad, Bihar, and Swami Kriyananda at Atmadarshan Yogashram, Bangalore, Karnataka.

April–May

In Italy, there were seminars on meditation and nada yoga at Trieste and Gzadisca. At the Montescudo country ashram, prana vidya, mantra and meditation, and tattwa shuddhi were taught by Swamis Anandananda, Gurupoojananda and Shaktidhara, and a Yoga Teachers Training

Course was inaugurated under the guidance of Swamis Anandananda, Shaktidhara and Gyanvilas.

July

Guru Poornima was celebrated at centres around the world. The second 'Yoga Festival' was held near the centre of Australia in Alice Springs.

August

In Ireland, a Teachers Training Course conducted by Swami Pragyamurti was concluded at the Galway Centre. Two Kriya Yoga courses were conducted for students and yoga teachers throughout Italy. In September a yoga meeting was held for all yoga teachers, swamis and karma sannyasins affiliated with Satyanandashram, Italy.

A series of six seminars were held at the Torino Centre. Lectures and seminars on yoga were conducted in Bologna, Trieste and Gradisca.

October–December

Shivadarshan Yogavidyalaya, Raigarh, held a series of yoga camps for the digestive system, asthma, diabetes and obesity, arthritis and gout, hypertension and cardiovascular management.

December

Swami Nirajan concluded the seminar at the IOC Barauni Refinery. Swamis Gurukripa and Omkarananda, along with Pragyateerthananda, Gyanbhikshu, Mangalteertham and Swayambhunath, conducted classes.

The completion of the one-year Sannyasa Course was celebrated on the 14th with bhajan, kirtan and havan conducted by Swami Nirajan.





In 1991, Sivananda Math was entrusted with a new task, that of caring for the poor amongst the villagers who were Sri Swamiji's neighbours in Rikhia district. The work of planning to provide the simple but necessary requirements for life was commenced. To learn how this came about, and gain some insight also into the Paramahansa sadhana, we can look at Swami Niranjan's own account.

Heart to heart with a Paramahansa

"The questions I have been asked most often ever since Sri Swamiji left Munger are, 'How is Sri Swamiji? What is he doing at present and when can we have his darshan?' As you already know, Sri Swamiji came to his sadhana place, tapobhoomi, from Trayambakeshwar, near Nasik, on 23rd September 1989, after he had the vision, or darshan, on 8th September 1989, of his ishta devata, Lord Mrityunjaya, and heard the clear instructions, 'Go to my cremation ground, the chitabhoomi.'

During his lifetime, Sri Swamiji has received darshan and commands of this nature on several occasions. Even when he lived at home in Almora, he had such experiences. He founded BSY only after he had received a command to do so at Trayambakeshwar some twenty years ago. Sri Swamiji's entire life has been guided and shaped by these darshans and, in retrospect, we can clearly see that the events in his life have been expressions of the divine will.

On 16th July 1989, at Trayambakeshwar itself, he received the command which has now become his next mission, 'To perfect the unbroken awareness of my guru mantra with every breath and heartbeat.' And soon after reaching his tapobhoomi at Lord Shiva's burial ground, Sri Swamiji immersed himself in naam smaran, remembering the Name.

The naam smaran sadhana, or akshara purascharana which Sri Swamiji performs, differs according to the season. Extending through the summer, from Makar Sankranti (mid-January) to Karka Sankranti (mid-July), the basis or medium of naam

smaran is panchagni. During monsoons, from Ashad Shukla Ekadashi (mid-July) to Kartik Shukla Ekadashi (mid-November), the chaturmas vrat, vow of sadhana for four months, is undertaken during which he remains in his small thatched kutir for four months. In winter, from Kartik Shukla Ekadashi to Makar Sankranti, the basis for naam smaran is pranayama.

Panchagni tapas, the austerity involving five fires, is performed in an open-air vedi where four dhunis are kindled with wood, and the fifth fire is the burning sun overhead. Inside the vedi, the temperature rises to 85 degrees centigrade and, on very hot days, even to boiling point. Even the concrete brick floor on which Sri Swamiji sits in padmasana becomes so heated that it would not be possible for an ordinary person to enter the vedi without shoes to protect the feet. Despite this unbearable heat,



he remains there from sunrise to sunset, completely absorbed in God's name. It is a sight to behold!

In 1990, the first year of commencing panchagni, Sri Swamiji gave thousands of disciples and devotees the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to have his darshan when he was giving the final ahuti, offering, to Agni devata. People flocked from all over the world to the Alakh Bara and had the rare glimpse of a Paramahansa performing this austere sadhana, which they had never seen but only read about in the biographies of saints who have left their footprints in the sands of time.

When pranayama is the basis of naam smaran in winter, Sri Swamiji commences his sadhana at midnight. These pranayamas are a combination of breathing exercises which we are familiar with, such as nadi shodhana, bhastrika, bhrumari, as well as higher pranayamas which are not revealed through books but directly from guru to disciple, through the medium of shruti. Along with pranayama, Sri Swamiji also practises hatha yoga and subjects himself to intense physical labour. He says that just as the mind is purified through dhyana, meditation, the emotions through bhakti, devotion, the physical body is purified through parishram, physical labour. But the highlight of his winter schedule is that he sleeps outdoors with no covering and at midnight, when the rest of the world tucks itself deeper into blankets and quilts, he ventures to take a bath out in the open under the starry skies, with freezing cold water which is kept overnight in urns to become cold! During this time he does not bathe at the well, as he does in summer, because the well water remains warm in winter!

During chaturmas vrat, the vow of sadhana during the rainy season, Sri Swamiji combines certain niyamas, disciplines, which differ every year, with naam smaran. This year the niyamas he chose were ekant, solitude, and mouna, silence. Sri Swamiji had undertaken a similar chaturmas vrat forty years ago in the dense forests near Rajnandgaon. It is only in solitude and silence that the inner voice is heard, and therefore these two niyamas are essential prerequisites if you want to see the form of God, feel his touch, hear his voice and smell his fragrance. God is revealed to his bhakta, devotee, when the mind is still and the inner chatter has completely ceased.



I had the great privilege of having Sri Swamiji's darshan at his tapobhoomi soon after he completed his chaturmas vrat on 18th November. He had transformed from being my guru, on whose lap I used to play as a child, to someone who was emanating the sort of radiance and glow that only a God-intoxicated soul can do. His skin glowed like burnt copper and his sparkling eyes pierced my very being. An aura of intense power and energy enveloped him, and all who were present stood by in mute awe and wonder.

I did not want to spoil that wonderful moment by asking him the question which all the devotees had been pressing me to do. I felt I was having the darshan, not of Sri Swamiji, but of Bhagavan himself in Sri Swamiji's form, and I wanted to bask in that experience. I was in the presence of someone who had dared to embark on a path which even angels fear to tread, and I did not want to end that moment by asking the mundane question, 'When can the devotees have your darshan'. It was at that very moment that Sri Swamiji spoke. He was looking through me as if his gaze

was fixed on a point far beyond in time. He said, 'Niranjan, I do not move by my own desires and impulses, I am being directed. I do not wish to see anyone, for I want my blackboard clear of all writings, memories and impressions, for the divine will to manifest'.

He once again became silent. I had received a reply to my first question. Once again he began to speak, and my second question was also answered without ever being asked.

He said, this time looking me straight in the eyes, 'During chaturmas, I have received another mandate. The mandate was clear and firm. "Your neighbours too should be provided with the facilities that I have provided for you." And on that day, with those very words, Paramahamsaji entrusted Sivananda Math with the immense responsibility of providing his neighbours in the surrounding villages, with living facilities similar to his own, some of whom in reality have barely one broken thatched roof above their head. Large families live crowded to capacity with no adequate toilet, cooking or bathing facilities.

On that day, Swami Atmananda, Swami Satyasangananda, Karobari of the Alakh Bara, and Swami Vedananda, made the sankalpa to each undertake the responsibility and cost of the first three houses to be built at Amarwa village. These will be simple structures with brick walls and tin roof, four 8 by 8 feet rooms with a verandah, an open kitchen like Sri Swamiji has, Sulabh-style toilets with no roof, only four walls as in the Alakh Bara, as well as a hand pump for each family.

Swami Atmanandaji, who now lives in Sukhman Marhi opposite Sri Panchdashnam Paramahamsa Alakh Bara, has also entered the paramahamsa lifestyle, after renouncing her ashram in Singapore, and donating all its assets to Sivananda Math to take up this work. She is the first sanniyasin disciple of Sri Swamiji and also the first Acharya of BSY. She was also a teacher to me when Sri Swamiji sent me to her ashram in Ireland at the age of eleven.

The first project undertaken was the renovation of Kali-asthan to seek her blessing. Work on the mandir is scheduled to start on Makar Sankranti, the day Sri Swamiji will enter into



ekant for one full year, in order to complete ashtottar shat laksh, 1,08,00,000, mantra puruscharana, that is, one crore, eight lakh japa which Paramahamsaji says will make him a crorepati (billionaire).

He said, 'Just as you people collect money, keep it in banks, earn interest and pay taxes, my earnings are God's name. I too pay taxes like you, for every 108 times I repeat His name I credit only 100 to my account. The eight repetitions I give to him as tax. I have now taken the sankalpa of becoming a crorepati with 108 lakh japas in my account. This year I become a lakhpati (millionaire) during the four months of chaturmas vrat, and next year I am destined to become a crorepati.' All of us present there felt how great Sri Swamiji's idea was, and how beautifully he had expressed it.

From 10th January, the Alakh Bara gates will once again close to all, for one year. Of course I do feel the unhappiness of not knowing when I will get the chance to have Sri Swamiji's darshan during that time, but over and above that, I feel for all of us the overpowering joy of being the medium to fulfil a mandate."



We all sat thinking it over. Later in the year, Swami Satsangi explained the history of Rikhia, its spiritual significance, Sri Swamiji's sadhana and his mandate in a full issue of *Yoga*. "When he directed the Bihar School of Yoga it was with perfection and intuition, guiding thousands of souls all over the world in their striving for perfection in life and beyond. Today, as an ascetic, far from the glitter and glamour of gurudom, he shows the same élan and ease," she wrote.

"Not only were the gates of the Alakh Bara closed in 1991," I remarked, "Ganga Darshan also received a strict mandate to close its gate to all visitors except those attending the one-year Sannyasa Training Course for Indian nationals. Swami Niranjan conducted the course personally and the various aspects of the Vedas, Upanishads, Samkhya, Bhagavad Gita, suktams, tantras, mahavidyas, yogas and other systems of Indian spiritual thoughts, techniques and traditions, were studied. The teachings given in the course became the subject matter of several publications,

including *Purusha Suktam*, *Tantra Vigyan*, *Gita Yoga Bhashya* and *Sannyasa Darshan*.

As my friend mulled over this piece of information, she suddenly quipped, "It's Ekadashi tomorrow, isn't it? So we chant the entire Bhagavad Gita?"

"Yes," I replied. "Chanting the Bhagavad Gita on Ekadashi, the eleventh day of the moon, and the Sundar Kand from Ramacharitamanas on Poornima, full moon, is another beautiful tradition started at Ganga Darshan. But tomorrow, we will have another special program – several aspirants will receive disksha."

"Yes, I have applied too and I am very nervous about it. What is it like to receive diksha from Swamiji?" she asked quietly.

The vision of all those occasions, when Swamiji would walk down neat rows of aspirants who would be sitting cross-legged with geru, yellow and white dhotis wrapped around their shoulders, floated



into my chidakasha. He would coil a mala around his philosophic fingers, touch it to his forehead, 'charging' it, and tenderly place it around the new initiate's neck. They would also receive a booklet which described the details of their initiation and its significance. The air would always be filled with a special vibration on these occasions – very powerful yet very peaceful.

"To receive anything from Swamiji is a blessing, but diksha or initiation is something else altogether," I attempted to explain this most unique of exchanges between guru and disciple. "As he said once, it opens up new doors of consciousness. The

experience is always very individual, very personal, one can hardly define it or understand it intellectually. Yet, as the years go by, one can see the impact the event created and perceive it as a landmark. Let's ask Sannyasananda. This neurophysiologist from Australia has a story I think."

Being initiated

"I first came to know about Swami Niranjan from Sri Swamiji's stories long before he resigned as guru and left Swami Niranjan to take his place. Many thought then that Swami Satyananda was still the guru for them, but I had an open mind and trusted Sri Swamiji's decision. If the guru says something, then we should accept that and so I did.

I had more personal interactions with Swami Niranjan in 1993 at Munger where I asked him for sannyasa initiation.

I recall sitting in Jyoti Mandir with hundreds of other people waiting for initiation only to have it cancelled. The next day we waited again and it was cancelled again! I wasn't disappointed despite my ten-year history of not being initiated. I had basically given up. Swamiji sent word to meet him the next day at 5 pm. It was my last day as I had to catch a train to Calcutta and fly back to Australia. My train left at 5.30 pm and it would take 20 minutes to get there. I was waiting and thinking that this wasn't going to happen in time. At that moment Swamiji arrived

by car, jumped out and ran up the steps to meet me. The fact that he was running to make the appointment with me, I found very respectful. I respected him for that and I respect him for his respect for me. The initiation was just Swamiji and I in his office. He sat me down and had me chant certain mantras with my eyes closed and doing a kriya, following arohan and avarohan pathways while he was chanting other mantras. Then the phone rang! It must have been a special phone call because he had to go and take it, then come back and finish the initiation. Ancient and modern in one moment!

Since then I have always kept an open mind and I've seen him work in his own way, always respectful, approachable and so knowledgeable in so many areas.

While Swami Satyananda is clearly one of the greatest gurus of the 20th century, what I see in Swami Niranjan is a great disciple and I respect him for that, because more than anything else, I aspire to be a better disciple like he is.

What has always inspired me about Swamiji is his versatility. Remarkable with children, possessing a vast experience from the East and the West, well-versed in Sanskrit, Samkhya, Vedanta and other philosophies and languages, very well read, compassionate with an inherent insight into people from all walks of life, Swamiji is a scientist as well as philosopher. He



is someone who definitely thinks on his feet and does things in unique ways. When the rain burst through the canopy at the Golden Jubilee celebrations at Munger in 1993, he grabbed the harmonium and turned the chaos into a big kirtan with everyone dancing and singing in the rain. He changed the whole atmosphere!

On another occasion at a seminar for Young Presidents Organization (YPO) in Bangalore recently, those who set up the stage had placed it on the floor in front of the audience who were all in chairs. Swamiji sat down on the mat and didn't say a word during the introductions. His first words after he was introduced were, 'Can I please have a chair?' Someone got him a chair and he sat on it cross-legged and said, 'Now I can see you! Before, all you could see was the top of my head' and continued with his talk. He is not afraid to make a change and get on with what needs to be done. He shared his experiences and understanding of what it is like to be a young executive, having been made a CEO himself at the age of twenty-three. He empathized and showed his understanding of being a young executive and the challenges faced in these positions of high expectations. He managed to do this with humour, humility, forthrightness and empathy.

Swami Niranjan is an excellent and gifted speaker. He can speak on virtually any topic with little or no preparation. If he doesn't know something he asks, which is really refreshing, and his jokes and infectious smile leave everyone inspired and uplifted. Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati is an inspiration to me, he is my guru, and he is my friend."

The learning comes in so many different ways, doesn't it?" remarked my friend.

Swami Ishwari who had stopped by to hand us malas to knot – the technique of knotting the tulasi, rudraksha or crystal initiation malas is another special ashram learning – recalled the 1991 Sannyasa Course. "Many of us are here now because we decided to take sannyasa after that year. Swamiji would not accept us straightaway – he insisted that everyone must go to their homes first and sort out there, for themselves, whether

they could actually return to the ashram and commit themselves fully to sannyasa. As I had been staying in the ashram for a while, he let me continue, but usually this is not the case."

"It seems very sensible to make people return to their previous base and reassess their commitment before initiating them into sannyasa," I agreed. "Especially in the presence of a guru, such an inspiring guide, and in surroundings like these, with the company of like-minded people it is easy to forget responsibilities and imagine that sannyasa life is easy. Many people have come here and stayed a few inspiring weeks or months, and leave saying what an easy lifestyle it is, and that they will return next time they need a rest. Mostly we only find



out the full strength of our complexes, desires and karmas after struggling for years along the road of sannyasa which seems to get progressively more precipitous. Better to get rid of excess baggage before starting such a journey."

"What about the swamis who had lived here before the course and had been sent out? Did they return to take up the work or did they settle outside? And how did the devotees around India and overseas react to being shut out of the ashram at that time?"

"It affected everyone differently. Some people did maintain some sort of contact and even had darshan of Sri Swamiji.

Swami Niranjan also travelled around India during this year, mainly in the Himalayas, meeting with various spiritual leaders. Others were denied any external contact at all and had to rely entirely on their inner guru. Three directors of the Satyananda Yoga Ashram at Mangrove Mountain, Australia, Swamis Poornamurti, Bhajananda and Savitananda, came to India to seek the guidance of Sri Swamiji and Swami Niranjan. Their visit encouraged the rekindling of the yoga movement in Australia.

"Bhajan, you're a man of few words a lot of the time, but tell us what your impression was."

A reluctant guru

"My first encounter with Swami Niranjan was at Mangrove Mountain in Australia in 1988. Eye contact, 'Hari Om', that was that. The second encounter, March '91 at Sri Panchdashnam Paramahansa Alakh Bara, and briefly during the journey from there to Ganga Darshan in the old ambulance, then during two weeks at Ganga Darshan for Navaratri sadhana.

My impression of Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati during this time? Quite human, dedicated, unimposing, to the point, a reluctant guru perhaps. There was no pedestal in sight, but there was an inspiring strength."

The meeting certainly resulted in the beginnings of a new life for yoga in Australia. The news that Mangrove Mountain was under the guidance of Swami Niranjan established the feeling of unity between the many different centres spread out over the continent. At Easter the Melbourne Yoga Therapy centre moved to bigger premises so that the healing aspects of their work could be extended. Guru Poornima saw the second 'Yoga Festival', held this time at Alice Springs, the heart of Australia, for independent devotees and yoga teachers. The kirtan group from Mangrove Mountain travelled widely helping to reintegrate the network of yoga schools and teaching centres. 1991 was a testing year and a new beginning.

Yoga of Head, Heart and Hands

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

The yoga darshan or philosophy of Swami Satyananda is very simple. Since the inception of Bihar School of Yoga at Sivanandashram, Lal Darwaja, in 1963, Sri Swamiji, as a yoga teacher, taught courses and classes, ran therapy courses, yoga sadhana programs and teacher training courses. What was the purpose behind developing the sequences and components of yoga that he did? Why didn't he follow the simple path of jnana marga, as is the tradition of sannyasins?



In the process of developing yoga, Sri Swamiji's perception was the growth of the total human being, the homogeneous human personality. Homogeneity of human personality lies in proper coordination, cooperation, association and expression of the qualities of head, heart and hands. It is as simple as that. This is the total yoga darshan as developed by Swami Satyananda.

From time immemorial people have been plagued by one eternal question: how to deal with the mind? Arjuna asked Krishna the same question in the *Bhagavad Gita*. How does

one deal with this mind which is more subtle than air and can never be grasped or held? Today we ask the same question. How can we manage our mind? How can we manage our desires, aspirations, thoughts and ideas? How can we give them a practical approach? How can we have the clarity and perception of mind to understand what is relevant and irrelevant?

In view of these various aspects that trouble a human being, Sri Swamiji developed the complete system of pratyahara. Even today in society people don't know the difference between pratyahara, dharana and dhyana. Many teachers say they teach meditation without even understanding the concepts of pratyahara and dharana. Sri Swamiji defined the concept, the applicability and the techniques of pratyahara. He established yoga nidra as the first technique of pratyahara. He developed other systems of concentration and meditation which he found in the tantras. The techniques of antar mouna and ajapa japa evolved as a result. Ajapa japa had been talked about for thousands of years, but no one had actually defined the practice. Sri Swamiji clarified the stages of the practice and the movement of the breath and mantra in the psychic passages. He gave a practical, understandable and attainable concept and structure to each practice. He defined the stages of antar mouna, chidakasha dharana and yoga nidra.

Sri Swamiji was the first to describe the process, salient points and techniques of prana vidya, which in its very elementary form is known today as Reiki. He introduced pranayama as a part of daily yoga sadhana. Twenty years ago people used to say that pranayama was dangerous. Other institutions did not teach pranayama as an integral part of a yoga class, only teachers of the Satyananda/Bihar Yoga tradition did. The pranayama techniques you are learning today are the teachings of Sri Swamiji. Which pranayamas are heating, or cooling, or balancing, their effects on different

states of the body, at different times of the day, in different climates, in different moods, how to develop the ability of the lungs to inhale, to exhale, to retain the breath – all this was taught in a sequential manner by Sri Swamiji.

Sri Swamiji explained and systematized the concept of bandhas and mudras. He simplified the entire system of hatha yoga shatkriyas by combining the techniques in one simplified version – poorna shankhaprakshalana. Shankhaprakshalana is not found in other yogic literature, and basti, dhauti, nauli and neti are discussed as separate techniques.

There are only two systems of kriya yoga existing in the world. One has come down from Babaji, who it is said was the creator and the founder. There have been many teachers in that line, the well-known ones being Paramahansa Yogananda, Sri Yukteshwar and Lahiri Mahashaya. The other system of kriya yoga was discovered by Sri Swamiji from the tantras. When kriya yoga was a secret with the belief that it could only be passed from guru to the most intimate disciple in the most intimate form, Sri Swamiji started a three-year postal correspondence course. The book that emerged out of this, *Yoga and Kriya*, is the only authentic encyclopaedia of yoga in existence today.

Swami Vivekananda spoke on yoga but never taught yoga, never taught asana or pranayama, he only spoke in theory. He did not develop yoga, he only presented the scriptural, philosophical aspect of yoga in everyday language. It was Swami Satyananda who linked the yogic concepts to the body; for example, which chakra corresponds to which nadi, which gland, which state of mind. Many people have done research on that subject. Dr Hiroshi Motoyama, in his book *Theories of the Chakras*, refers to the philosophy and practices of Swami Satyananda. Dr Serena Roney-Dougal, author of *Where Science and Magic Meet*, discovered the role, functions and benefits of the chakras and their corre-

spondence with the psychophysiological system. Intellectuals and thinkers around the world have accepted and worked on these ideas.

The original APMB, which was published in 1968, had 70 pages. Today APMB has over 500 pages, but in the original content Swami Satyananda had described the physiological, psychological and spiritual benefits, the sequences we are following today and what has been discovered by medical, scientific and therapeutic research.

Swami Satyananda also developed a process for opening the heart and created a system through which it could be done. He also created a system for developing the qualities of the hands by insisting that Ganga Darshan is a gurukul, despite it having attained university status. This structure and discipline is not only an institutional mandate, it is to create an environment where one can develop the qualities of the hands by being creative. Creativity is not dissipation. People often ask how they can be creative in the ashram when there is limited scope and areas for work, performance and living. There may be more options to be creative outside, but there are distractions too. For the training to become creative, one has to focus on one thing, digging one hole 500 feet deep, not 50 holes ten feet deep.

Sri Swamiji says very clearly that he is what he is today because of what he underwent and experienced in his guru's ashram. That has made him what he is today. In his message to the participants of a sannyasa course he mentioned that in his guru's ashram he lived with a passion for work. He emphasized the aspect of karma yoga and gave it a practical form, a body, and it became part of the ashram culture. Otherwise karma yoga was only a philosophy, do the action and don't expect any results or fruits. Everyone talks about it, but where is the place where you can confront your mind, your ideas, your nature, your perceptions, your conflicts. It is

the ashram. This is where karma yoga can become a part of life and only when this happens we are able to change our perceptions and attitudes.

In time the aspect of the heart will turn into bhakti, not the bhakti which is expressed outside for selfish gains, but bhakti in the form of a connection, of feeling, not only with God but with God manifest in each individual being. As Sri Swamiji's mission has evolved, we are also seeing different areas being developed. Sivananda Math is an expression of bhakti. The act may be classified as social service, but the aim has been bhakti. Sri Swamiji has used the word *atmabhava*, oneness, not with God which is too distant a reality, but with the touchable, palpable, physical God. By connecting with the physical there is the hope that there may be a connection with the transcendental.

Sri Swamiji is showing a path, not developing a philosophy as Buddha or Mahavir or others did. He is teaching and presenting a way of life in a very practical form. I am not eulogizing him, I am appreciating the work and effort which was put into developing a complex system for the growth of head, heart and hands. Therefore, the development of yoga in today's age has been the effort of Swami Satyananda.

There are many excellent institutions in the world teaching hatha yoga or raja yoga or jnana yoga or bhakti yoga, and each path or tradition or system has its own uniqueness and speciality. But the most comprehensive and most defined yoga is Bihar Yoga, which has to be lived to be experienced, not learned in a classroom. That is the difference. We can learn yoga in a classroom situation anywhere in the world. There are many universities or schools offering yoga training, but it is only intellectual. There are many centres and individual teachers who are teaching yoga throughout the world, but it is only a physical component, an hour of asana, pranayama and relaxation.

Swami Satyananda was the first to combine a direction for the development of the mind, a direction for the movement of the heart and a direction for the creativity of the hands, all three, keeping in view the development of human potential, consciousness and energy. Sri Swamiji gave yoga a new life, a new birth; he revived yoga otherwise it would have been lost. Therefore, he is the Patanjali of today. That has been his contribution. People today do not realize Sri Swamiji's contribution to yoga, but tomorrow they will know that he was the Patanjali of this age.



It should be the continual effort of every yoga aspirant and yoga teacher who passes through Ganga Darshan and undergoes training here to maintain the sanctity and sacredness of this yogic process, and to have the feeling that he/she can have a yogic life, a complete life, a full life. When there are mental problems, head trips, interaction and association problems, manage them. Use the knowledge, the training, the wisdom and the understanding which you are trying to gain and develop. The message that Sri Swamiji has given is: don't lose hope in yourself. ॐ



January

Swami Niranjana conducted a program at the Mokama Ghat in Munger.

Swami Kaivalyananda conducted yoga programs in Saharsa, MECON and CMPDIL Ranchi, D.G.M. South Dhanbad and the Bokaro Steel Plant in Bihar, Kolkata and I.M.A. Haldia in West Bengal, IOC, Gujarat, Sion and Mumbai, and travelled to the USA for one month.

March

Swami Niranjana conducted the Utkal Yoga Convention in Bhubaneswar, Orissa. He visited the Sivananda Centenary Boys' School, run under the leadership of Swami Sivchidananda.

April

A one-month Teacher Training Course was held at Ganga Darshan. During Navaratri a special sadhana course was guided by Swami Niranjana.

In Italy a seminar on 'Yoga and Meditation' was conducted by Swami Anandananda in Bolzano and in Vittorio Veneto. Three seminars were conducted at Montescudo Ashram for yoga teachers.

May

A Yoga Health Management Course was conducted at Ganga Darshan from the 15th to 20th.

July

Swami Anandananda conducted a special Kriya Yoga seminar at the Montescudo country ashram in Italy.

September

Swami Niranjana conducted yoga lectures in Darbhanga, North Bihar.

October

A six-month Introductory Sannyasa Training Course for overseas students was commenced by Swami Niranjana.

November

Swami Niranjana conducted the Patna Yoga Sammelan from

20th to 22nd. Swamiji addressed senior doctors from the Indian Medical Association. The function was presided over by the Hon Justice Sri K.B.N. Singh, ex-Chief Justice of Madras High Court. Sri Devendra Prasad Singh, ex-Vice Chancellor of Bhagalpur University, was the chief guest.

Yogi Amrit Desai from the USA visited Munger and met Swami Niranjana, and contributed his seva to the ashram for two weeks.

His Eminence Beru Khyense Rimpoche, third in the Tibetan Karma Khaji tradition, visited Ganga Darshan and performed Tibetan sacred chanting and spoke on the role of yoga in the Tibetan spiritual experience and the need for unity on Earth.

Sannyasa Course participants and swamis travelled with Swami Niranjana to the Alakh Bara in Rikha to have darshan of Sri Swamiji. The return journey included darshan of the jyotirlinga at Baidyanath Mandir, Deoghar.





Sannyasa was the main guiding force in Ganga Darshan during these years. In 1992, people from many different countries gathered for the six-month Sannyasa Training Course for overseas students. After over a year the gates of Ganga Darshan opened again from January and people from all over India and overseas flocked to the ashram for Swami Niranjan's darshan and guidance. The three largest groups of overseas students were from Greece, Italy and Germany.

Perhaps inspired by Ganga Darshan, Mangrove Mountain, the largest of the Australian ashrams, closed itself to visitors, from December to the end of January 1992 for a Self-Healing program. Shortly after this, Swamis Atmamuktananda, Annapoorna, Jyotirmayananda, Gautam and Nirbeeja travelled to Ganga Darshan for Swami Niranjan's guidance and returned with encouraging messages and a video of Swamiji and Ganga Darshan, and thus inspired a large number of Mangrove residents to join his six-month Sannyasa Introduction Course.

In Munger, courses were arranged for the needs of all the visitors and Swamiji gave mantra diksha and jignasu initiations. Jignasu initiation had only been given to half a dozen people previously, but Swamiji now insisted on this step for people who were searching for a deeper commitment to spiritual life. It represents a transitional stage where seekers work to balance their lives and mind so that they can remain one-pointed in different circumstances. Generally, it now precedes karma sannyasa, where initiates learn to maintain their equilibrium as they move through their normal duties as householders. For those who wish to take sannyasa diksha also, jignasu is testing ground. Swami Gyansiddhi tells of what sannyasa means to her.

Guru's grace is all

"I first saw Swamiji in the January 1991 edition of Yoga Vidya. His photograph held a certain attraction for me and I felt inclined to meet him and take mantra diksha. At that time I did not know much about the ashram, not even that Swamiji was

its guru and the administrator of the ashram, so I was in quite a dilemma as to how I could approach him and him alone, and ask for mantra diksha.

My desire for his darshan brought me to the ashram for the Teacher Training Course in 1992. When I heard that Swami Niranjan was the one who gave mantra diksha to everyone I was overjoyed. It was like someone who dreams of something for a long time and suddenly finds it. When I saw Swamiji for the first time I was overwhelmed and kept on looking at him without even blinking. He was the essence of my imagination – pure, unattached, human and a grand personality. I spontaneously bowed my head to his feet and knew that I didn't have to go anywhere else. I knew I had to take sannyasa initiation from him and devote the rest of my life to him, dedicating all that is within my capacity to him. In my mind there was just one prayer, 'O my Gurudev, please accept me.'



Coincidentally, the day I approached Swamiji for sannyasa was my birthday. I told him that and said that I wanted him to bless me so I would succeed in attaining my goal. Swamiji said, 'Certainly', asked for mangoes to be brought, and presented them to me with his own hands. That was the most precious birthday gift I have ever received. I was overjoyed. He gave me permission to take sannyasa, but added that sannyasa was to be taken for the service of others, not to make anyone unhappy, therefore I must be able to convince my parents.

After the Teacher Training Course, although I did not want to go back, my parents came to fetch me because they did not want me to take sannyasa. Swamiji said, 'Go home and come back after everyone is happily convinced. The first test of sannyasa is to attain the permission of parents. If you cannot convince them, how can you convince yourself and others?' At that time I did not know the importance of the guru's instructions to the disciple and I was insisting on remaining here, behaving like I used to at home with my parents. Swamiji said, 'Although I will never ask you to do so, if I should ask you to jump in the well, you should do so to uphold the guru's instructions. As many times as you refuse to go back, I will mark you with minus signs.' Then nothing remained for me to say and I had to go back home.

At home I felt that I would never be able to return to his feet. During those moments of depression I had just one prayer on my lips, 'Gurudev, please call me back. I cannot live in this world any longer.' He heard my prayers and I got the opportunity to return to the ashram. Ever since accepting him as guru I have been aware of his blessing and love every moment. Life has become really simple and uncomplicated. My desires get fulfilled before I can even express them. I feel as secure in the guardianship of Swamiji as fledglings feel in the nest. All my insecurities are totally gone and I always feel that he is with me. Within me and all around me is the armour of his security. Having found him I feel life is complete, nothing else remains to be achieved in life. There is an intense inspiration in my mind to surrender at his feet all that is within my capacity. A meaningless, aimless life has found direction.

His mere darshan solves half the problems and the other half are solved by his childlike sense of humour. My heart fills with happiness and excitement at his very presence. Rather, the very thought of him makes me happy. People come to Swamiji for his darshan, their faces reflecting tensions and the load of their problems, but when they emerge from the kutir, a smile invariably plays on their faces as if someone has magically absorbed all their problems. He has a solution for everyone's problems and queries. Every time I have gone up to him with my problems, having decided on the points to ask him, after two minutes I begin to feel that nothing remains to be asked, and emerge laughing from his presence. Similarly

in satsang my senses become alert by themselves so as not to miss a word.

His grand personality compels one to bow before him with shraddha, faith. Surrender towards him is a natural action. There is no need to fight with the intellect and no need for any kind of effort. There was a time when I was one of the so-called atheists. I was a science student and conditioned to look for concrete proof and evidence behind all theories. I would never visit temples or show any interest in sadhus and sannyasins. In fact, I would make fun of those who visited temples and attended satsangs. But now when God is directly before me in the form of Sri Swamiji and Swamiji, how can I negate His existence?



I don't know which facet of his personality has impressed me the most. Perhaps it is his purity, his stainless Niranjana-ness which has always appealed most to me. He is a tremendous inspiration to become pure and enlightened. I had never imagined that anyone like him could exist in this world. He is beyond the human dimension. For me he is a reflection of Lord Shiva."

And Gyansiddhi hurried off to deal with her work. "As we were saying," I remarked to the questioner, "Swamiji had instructed those who had completed the one-year sannyasa course of 1991 to go out at the end of that year, so many of his new students were not in Ganga Darshan for those early months of 1992. Also, many of the more experienced swamis who had been sent out in 1990 on *parivrajaka*, wandering as mendicant monks, had not yet returned or had established centres elsewhere. The tone of the ashram had been noticeably changed by this and the disciplined work and training which had taken place during 1991. The practice of silence from 6 pm to 6 am, and during all mealtimes led to a greater tendency to introversion, but this was coupled with extroverting sadhanas such as karma yoga and karate yoga for awareness and energy to remain high."

When the people who had completed the Sannyasa Course of 1991 returned, after sorting out their commitments, Swamiji initiated those ready for sannyasa into the Saraswati parampara. However, everything was now gearing up for the six-month Introductory Sannyasa Course. Swamiji integrated this course for overseas students into a more outward-looking ashram environment than had prevailed in 1991. At first I thought this would dilute the experience, but then later realized that because many students were coming from different cultures and experiencing India, the ashram, and living with guru for the first time, it would entail a lot of psychological adjustments from the beginning.

The course was preceded by the Navaratri anushthana which purifies and awakens energy and, in September, Swami Niranjana was invited to speak at Darbhanga, in North Bihar, with the knowledgeable and widely respected pandits of that

place. Such an invitation is both a challenge and an honour. The location for the debate was at the foot of a huge statue of Ma Kali in the Kali temple. Swamiji's opening speech was in honour of Kali. Likening himself and the gathered pandits to her children, he called for harmony, playfulness and cooperation amongst them, as befits children before their mother. The spontaneity and penetration of his speech spoke to the hearts of the assembled scholars. No one opposed Swamiji in debate and he was given public honours.

The course began in October 1992, just as the weather begins to cool. Swamiji regularly took ten or fifteen students out with him to programs at this time. In November, he went to Patna for a yoga convention accompanied by twenty swamis and course participants who taught and lectured on the scientific aspects of yoga at varying locations. Swami Kaivalyananda led the morning yoga class which was followed each day by satsang with Swamiji. Each day there was an impressive list of venues and speakers and literally thousands benefited from the programs. Swamiji attended a press conference at the Samrat International Hotel, and met with the workers of the International Yoga Mitra Mandal, Patna Branch. After the function Swamiji recorded an All India Radio, Patna broadcast on 'Yoga and the Young', and Patna Television recorded a discussion with him on 'Yoga and Modern Man'.

"I suppose going to these yoga conventions with Swamiji put things in perspective for the newcomers," remarked my listener.

"Yes, valuable training and a delightful experience. Intense training also continued for those who had participated in the 1991 course, and had since been initiated into sannyasa by Swami Niranjana. The participation in the six-month course was made doubly challenging because it was in English. One hundred and twenty-five overseas students attended from October 1992 to March 1993 from Australia, Bulgaria, Colombia, England, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, Ireland, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden, Uruguay and USA. In Italy a group of dedicated students had made themselves ready to attend the course,

Swamis Anandananda and Shaktidhara also spent the entire six-month period at Ganga Darshan under Swamiji's guidance. Swami Sivamurti attended the opening month of the course and then returned to Greece to attend to various commitments.

"Here is someone who participated in that course from Europe, Swami Maitreyi, from Sweden. She can explain the impact of meeting Swamiji on her life."

Do not escape from life, escape into life

"I can explain it best by telling you of a dream I had. I saw myself sitting in a big theatre, the stage placed in the middle, and I was sitting on a simple stool. I was all alone except for a group of

people dancing on the stage. They were wrapped in transparent veils, and as they danced they moved the veils like waves, so smooth, so beautiful. My heart was touched and my eyes filled with tears because of the beautiful image, but also because of the fact that I wasn't amongst them. I wanted to be a part of that dance, I wanted to move like an ocean wave, flow like a stream, like they did.

After a while another being entered the stage. It was a being not really human but human in appearance, standing in the background just observing, dressed in a white mantle reaching to the feet, all shining. As I was sitting there I was too afraid even to think of entering the stage and taking part in the dance,



a white swan came up behind me and wrapped his wings around me, bent his long neck and laid it around my neck, and I felt so much love and light flowing from him, filling me. And gently, gently, he pushed me forward towards the stage till I just dared to sit up at the very edge for a short moment, then I moved away from it again. But the first step was taken, then the vision disappeared.

At that time of my life I had the feeling of not really living, I felt that I had lived my life so far without really participating in life. I wanted to feel the life and I wanted to learn how to live. I wanted to learn how to flow with life. One year later I am at Ganga Darshan, participating in the sannyasa course, and I suddenly remember the vision that I had a year before.

Now the Great Swan is gently, gently pushing me towards the stage of life, filling me with love, light and strength. I hear Swami Niranjan's words ringing in my ears, 'Don't escape from life, escape into life.'

What has inspired me the most in Swamiji is his ability to connect with anyone, whether it be the President of India, the workers of the ashram, or an unknown person on the street. He can melt the stoniest of hearts and crack open the hardest of skulls and expose the beautiful crystal inside.

Wherever he goes people are drawn to him like bees to a flower. And like a flower he lets the bees drink the nectar without being the least affected. The flower does not produce nectar for itself, nor its beauty and fragrance. It only finds satisfaction in the giving and doing its duty, but in the process it makes the bees also perform their duty without them realizing it. Swamiji is like that flower.

He teaches us that spiritual life is not flying high in the sky, but to walk with both your feet on the ground and with eyes wide open looking straight ahead, not left or right. He says that awareness is being aware of each and every detail in life and applying our mind accordingly. Once when we were travelling in a car to Rikhia, Swamiji said to us, 'You people look everywhere but you see nothing. You think of



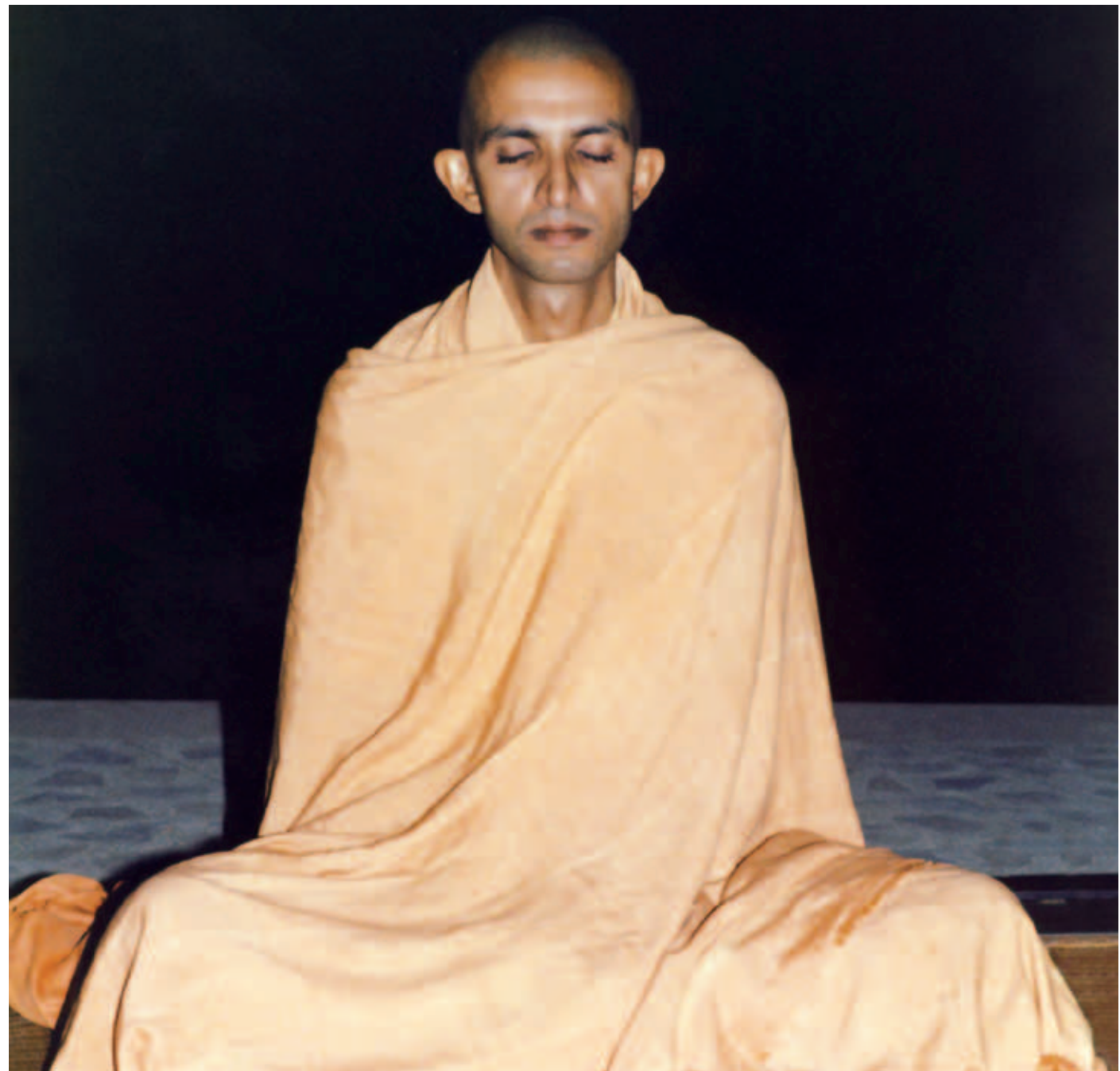
everything, but you understand nothing. You keep your eyes open, but you see nothing. You just chat away your life being completely unaware of what is actually going on around you. Why? Because you don't care. You only care about yourself. When I am going in a car through the countryside, I look at the quality of the soil, the different crops that are being cultivated and the quality of the crop, the tools being used, the condition of the animals, the state of the water, and I know the people, I know their every need. I know every village and town where I am going.'

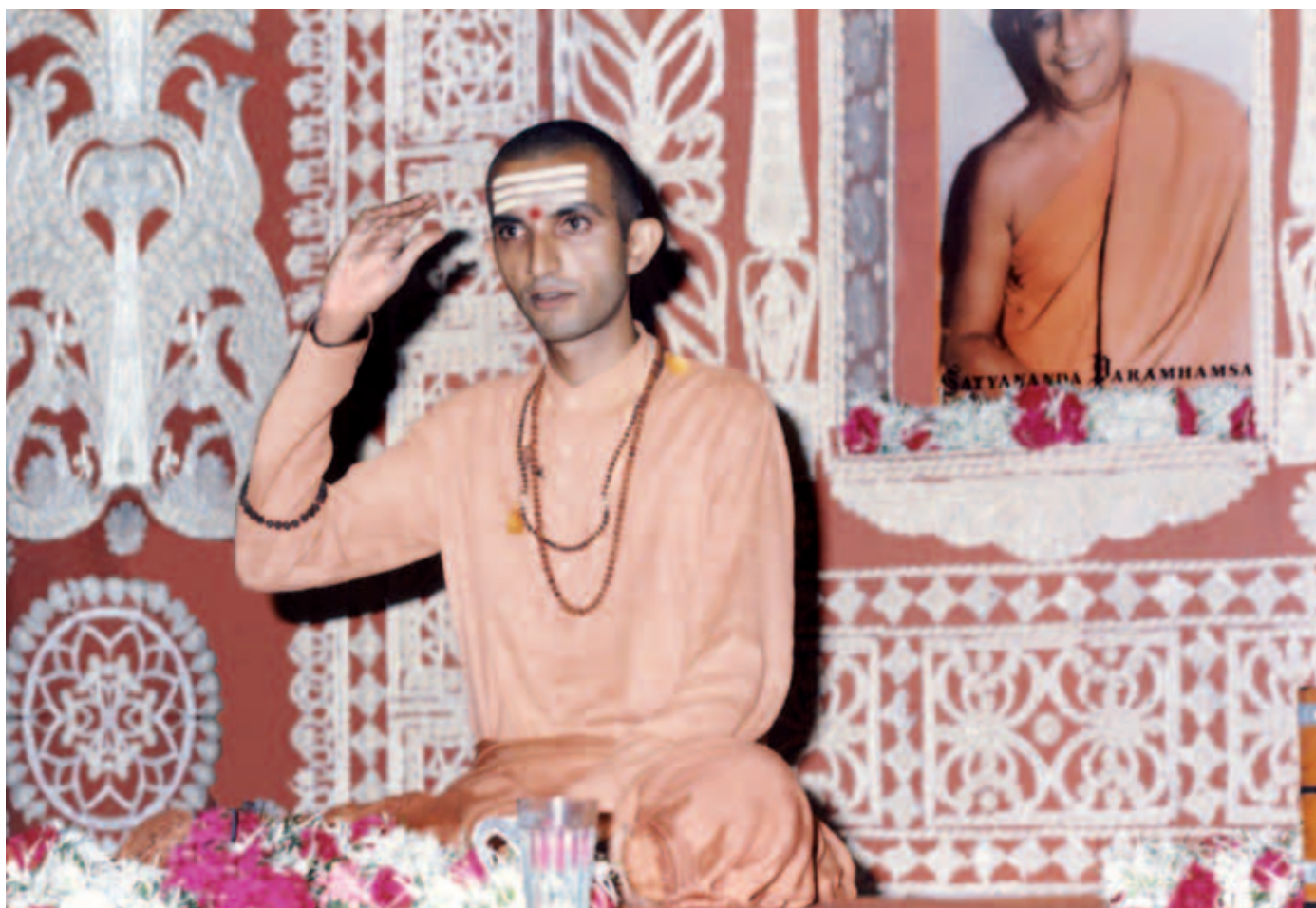
Swamiji has taught us that to live sannyasa is to take responsibility. 'The meaning of vairagya is to take responsibility and expand your sense and area of responsibility. If you see some rubbish lying around in your own garden you will pick it up immediately, but if you see the same rubbish lying around on the street you will think, it is not my responsibility. But vairagya is to feel that same responsibility wherever you go. It is to feel the same responsibility for every child that you feel for your own child, to care for every place as your garden, to care for everyone as your family.'

Living yoga is developing perfection and excellence in life – this is another point he emphasizes time and again. Swamiji is a living example of such perfection and excellence. Every act that he performs, whether the most mundane or the most difficult, is done with the same finesse. Can we mortals acquire this ability? He says yes, improve yourself little by little every day and you will get there.

Once Swamiji said, 'Whatever I do, I do for the sake of duty.' Whether he is kind and loving with us, whether he laughs and jokes with us, whether he is firm and furious with us, it always has a purpose. It is always to teach us, guide us and help us to evolve and find ourselves.

On another occasion, Swamiji said to us, 'You all love me but you hate each other. You all care for me, but you do not care for each other.' It made us realize that to serve guru is to serve all, the love for guru is love for all, and connection with guru is connection with everyone and everything.





One thing that I have learnt from Swamiji that guides me in my daily life is: the past is gone and the future will take care of itself, what is relevant is the now. The only important thing is to do our best and make the most of the present moment. This means that whatever you get, enjoy it, and what you don't get, don't miss it. And share whatever you have been given with others."

Throughout the six-month Sannyasa Course, Swami Niranjana gave hatha yoga and meditation classes and satsangs, some of which formed the basis of his book *Yoga*

Darshan. His lectures investigated the basis for yoga in the Upanishads, Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* and other classical texts. There were also many practical sessions where the instructions given in these texts were explained and practised under his personal supervision.

The practices of Saurya tantra were taught for the first time as an anushtana. The blending of mantra, visualization and kundalini yoga techniques had an electric effect on the energy of the participants and the ashram life was designed to channel this constructively. Simultaneously, Swamiji

explained the esoteric basis of this sadhana during interactive evening programs.

When the course ended everyone was brought face-to-face with their needs and aspirations in life and received guidance from Swami Niranjana regarding their own strengths and weaknesses. Many initiations were given but only twelve people, from India, Argentina, Australia, England, Germany, France, Bulgaria and Italy, were given sannyasa diksha.

"It must have been extraordinary to be at the ashram during that time," remarked my companion.

"Yes, it was," I replied. "It makes an unusual testimony. So many idealistic individuals from so many places, all putting in maximum effort to transform themselves into skilled people who can express those ideals in their lives, and work for a common purpose. Swami Niranjana has said that 'brotherhood' has remained a mere concept although it has been put forth as an ideal for thousands of years, because people have not been able to unify their ideals and philosophy with their day-to-day actions and lifestyles. I think all of us who participated in that sannyasa course can truly say that we have seen world brotherhood, not only philosophically, but in action and reality.

"In fact, Swamiji has often emphasized the necessity of living in an ashram for some time to recharge the batteries that have gone flat through the rigours of daily living. For some such a 'break' provides much-needed rest, but for others it can be an unexpectedly high-voltage experience. Sannyasi Karmadhara from Delhi can speak for herself."

Swami for all seasons

"The first time I heard of Swami Niranjana was when a friend suggested that I should meet him at BSY, where I planned to attend the therapy course in May 1992. This led me to conclude that he must be in charge of registering people into the course. I had no clue as to who he was, but I remember thinking that his name was inconveniently long, especially for a swamiji who interacts with the public continuously.

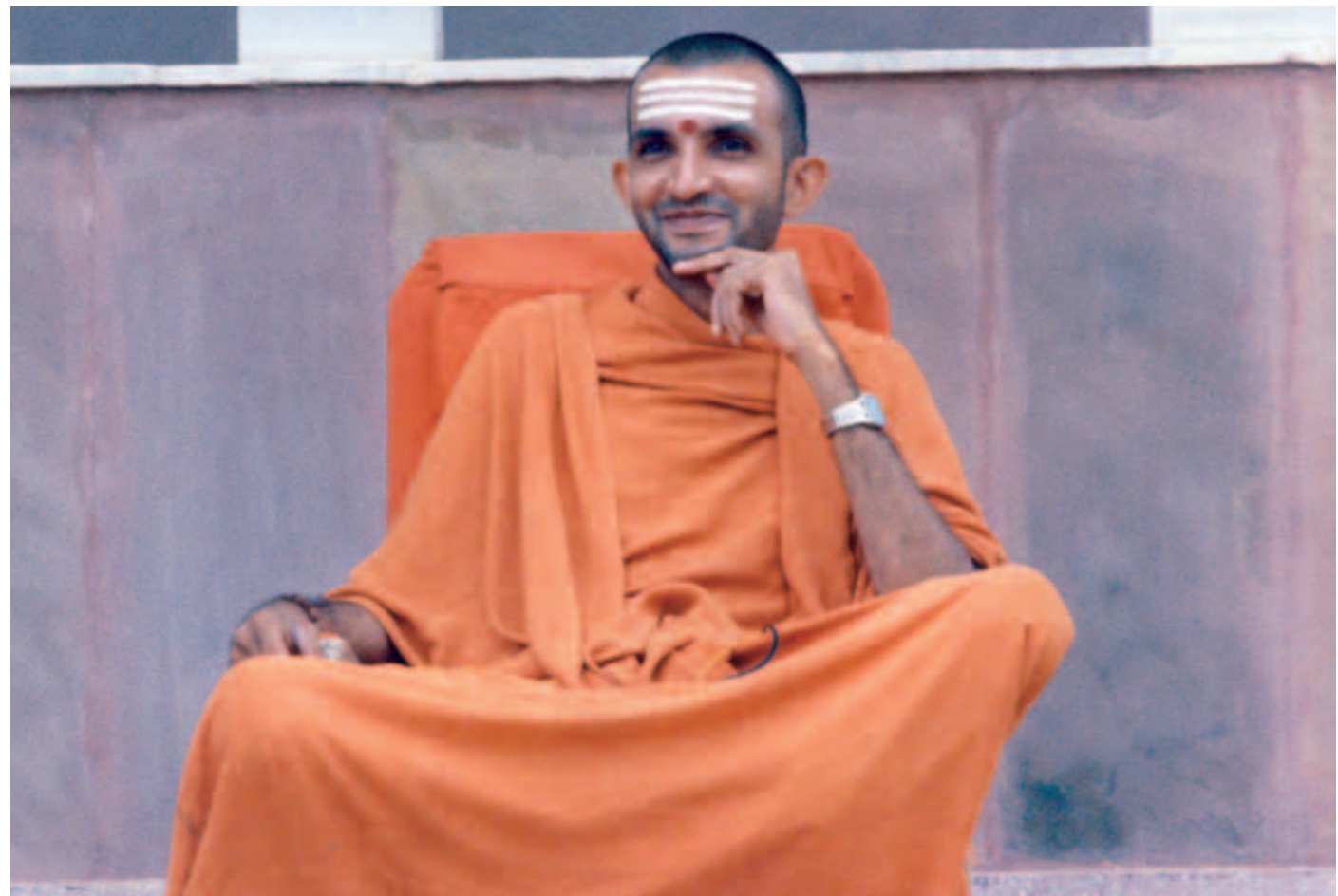
Before the course was scheduled I was visiting Patna and decided to pay a short visit to the ashram and be back within the day.

The entire plan materialized with amazing ease. I entered the gates of the ashram, I had a gut feeling that I had come to the right place. I felt an innate, unquestioned faith in the institution right away. As I walked into the foyer, I saw a swami at the counter in full regalia, it being Navaratri and his sannyasa initiation day. Not surprisingly he was sparkling with 'tej' and I remember that as I waited for my turn to speak with him, I had a strange feeling of familiarity with the circumstances.

As I began to familiarize myself with the ashram campus, aided by a little girl who was fired by enthusiasm to tell me the past, present and future of BSY all at the same instant, I saw at a distance, a group of swamis standing near the kutir. The little girl was all aflutter. 'Look, that is Swami Niranjan. Look! Look!' I looked but could not figure out who among that jumble of geru could be him. What would he have to be like to be him? I hadn't a clue. I thought I saw a figure in orange really lean, lanky and boyish. I promptly ruled him out. We assembled for cleaning duties the next morning after breakfast, and there was that slim swami, standing slightly aloof, observing everyone discreetly.

The little girl found her chance and whispered in my ear, 'This is Swami Niranjan!' I gave his figure another look. Before I could see his face, I was pounced upon by Swami Satyadharma who was an eager claimant for my services. Also because among the miserable sick lot of asthmatics, arthritics and patients with myriads of ailments, I looked relatively able bodied. Swami Niranjan was not to be seen thereafter for a few days.

Something happened a couple of days later which stirred up my dormant unconscious faculties. I was asleep one morning when strange sound vibrations jerked me up to consciousness. I strained to hear. It was a voice chanting something and others were repeating the chant after him.



Such was that voice's hold over me that early the next morning I hastily left my bed and hurried towards the chanting. In the diffuse morning light I saw a cluster of swamis sitting on the lawn, and Swami Niranjan sitting on a chair, chanting Sanskrit into a megaphone. There was no one around and for a minute I was filled with apprehension. Maybe I was committing a breach of conduct. Maybe I should not be here listening to all this. But the magnetism of the voice was gripping. Although I could not understand what was being said apart from a few slokas and words here and there, something inside me was in communication with it all, buried somewhere deep within me, struggling to assume

the forefront. I sat behind a group of bushes, very quietly, so as not to disturb anyone. Mesmerized, I let the sound pass through me. It finished almost too quickly.

Thereafter it became a routine to listen to the chanting every morning. I was not aware that Swamiji had noticed my presence. Not once had I caught a movement in his eyes towards my direction. After those sessions I would distinctly feel a flicker of light in me, the spirit, soul, atma or whatever, shone stronger and brighter. I began to feel a strong association with Swami Niranjan.



Meanwhile, a lot of concepts, conflicts and doubts within me began to be resolved by themselves. Suddenly I had the answers. It was not as though I was learning something new, but as if layers of a haze were vanishing from my mind to enable me to clearly see something which had always existed.

My first opportunity to look at him from a close range was when he addressed the participants of the therapy course. I remember it to be a sensory, intellectual and emotional overload, such was his charisma. Eagerly I lapped up every word that escaped his lips, my

vision taking in every detail of his personality. His eyes mesmerized me. They glittered like a crystal though his gaze was steady and still, fixed in the distance. While we sweated and fidgeted in the sweltering heat, he looked fresh, pure and totally at ease.

During the next encounter with him, he spoke to me for the first time. A group of us patients went to him with our problems. As we sat down he looked at me and said, 'Do you come for the morning class?' My heart skipped a beat. Maybe I would get reprimanded. Meekly I said, 'Yes.' But he was smiling.

'Why?' he asked me. All I could say was, 'I like it very much. I've heard my father chant a few of these slokas. I feel peaceful on hearing them.' His next question was, 'But why do you sit so far away from us?' In all honesty I replied that I did not consider myself to be fit to be sitting in such exalted presence. At this he became a bit serious and said, 'Every one of us is a traveller on the path. There is nothing special about us. You are welcome to sit with us and be a part of it.' For me there was no looking back thereafter.

These are my very first encounters with Swamiji. I never cease to wonder at the number of roles that fit into the wide spectrum of his existence. At times, he comes through as a friend, so much so that I have to wilfully restrain myself from playing a prank on him. At other times it is very clear, 'Do not touch him. You'll burn.'

Once in the library I came across a newspaper cutting from the Illustrated Weekly, a journal with a wide circulation in India in the seventies and eighties, in which Swami Niranjana was described as a 'linguist, scientist, bal yogi, administrator and orator' under the title 'A Sannyasin for All Seasons.'

It does the world proud to have him – a legacy of Indian Sanatan dharma, an embodiment of universal knowledge and values nonpareil in the world."

"These were also the years when Swamiji visited various luminaries of the spiritual traditions of India. Isn't that correct?" asked my companion.

"Yes, but he never talks much about these meetings. However, sometimes he took swamis along with him who can give us a glimpse into these uplifting times. Let us ask Swami Vedantananda."

Floating down the Ganges with Swan

"I first met Swami Niranjana on the first floor of his Yoga Arogya office way back in 1985. Since then, there have been many meetings, memories and teachings. One favourite memory is taking a trip with him to Varanasi in the early nineties.

We stayed in Assi Ghat, the last ghat at Varanasi. He had come to visit various akharas and ashrams situated on the banks of the river.

One day we took a boat ride down the Ganges to visit these akharas. On the way we passed the smaller of the two burning ghats. Swamiji asked the boatman to go in a little closer and, as always, a body was burning. He playfully recounted the reaction of another swami who was on the boat when he did this last. I am sure he was watching my reaction too.

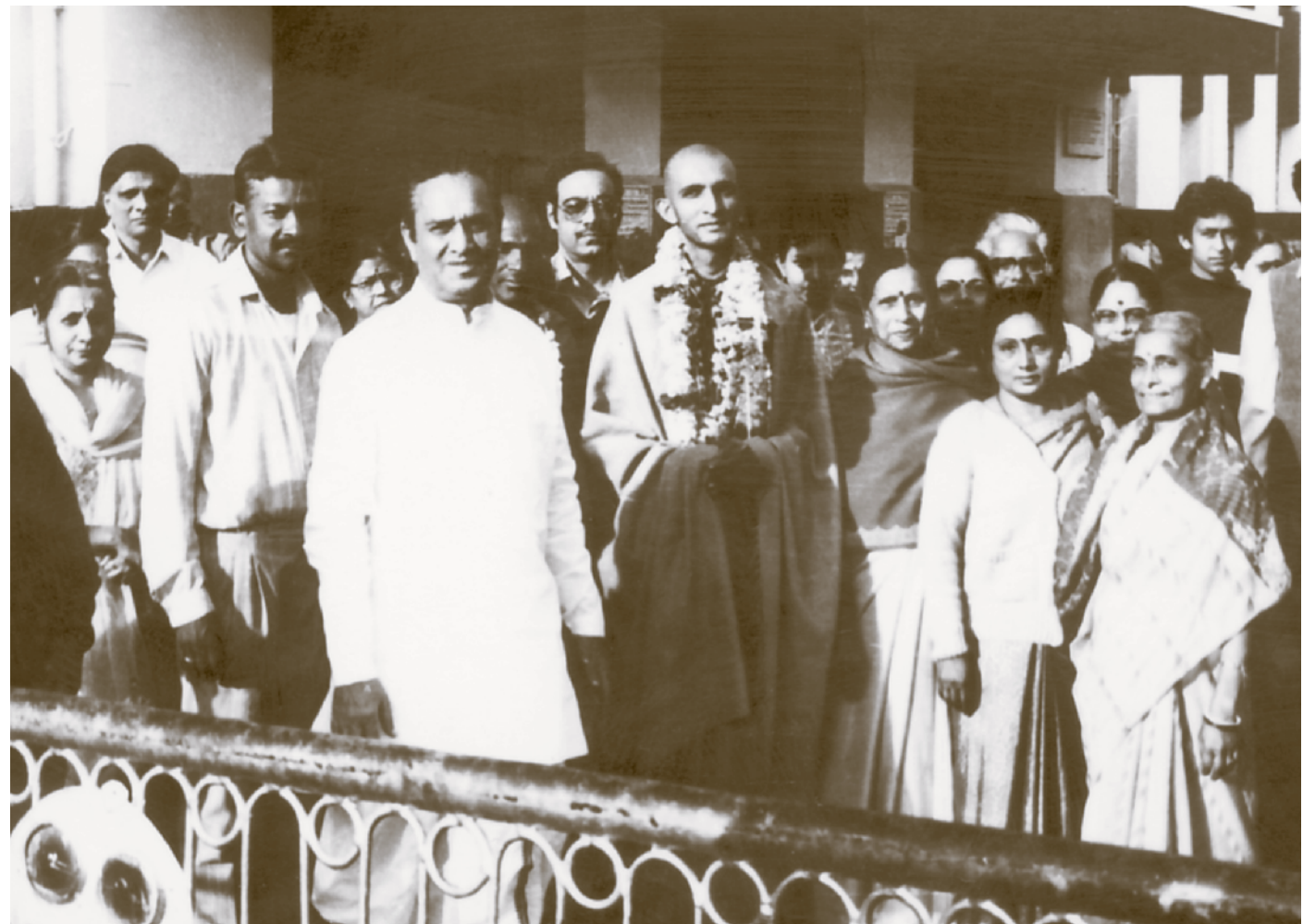
There is something timeless about the Ganges; life has been going on by this sacred river in much the same way for centuries. On the river there is total peace and stillness, and yet on the water's edge, and beyond, life in all its forms, hustle and bustle, is taking place. When I am there on the river I always have the feeling I am watching the most colourful theatre in the world, and entering timelessness.

At one point Swamiji took over the oars, and with the new captain at the helm the experience became extremely joyful.

We stopped at several different akharas, some with swamis and acharyas wearing immaculate dhotis and some where the clothing seemed insignificant; we met naked babas doing extraordinary asanas in the soft sand of the river bank. Swamiji greeted and interacted with them all with the same grace, dignity and charm.

When you spend time with someone like Swami Niranjan you begin to realize the magnitude of their role. How many diverse areas they are working in, all the time, and how little we can see of the whole picture. It made me think of how many times we go to Swamiji with our petty little problems, when with a little swadhyaya and meditation we could probably solve them for ourselves.

Further along the river Swamiji reached into the river, picked out a rose petal and gave it to me. As I held it in my hand, I was deeply touched by the gesture, and thought, 'Shall I keep it?' I thought about how it would shrivel and die, and



would be just another attachment – 'Oh Swamiji gave this to me.' I rolled the petal in my hand and put it back in the river and having had a glimpse of impermanence, stayed with the moment. He smiled.

By late afternoon we began our journey back. It was getting dark and the full moon was shining. People had begun their evening poojas at the water's edge. Small candles were being placed into the river along with flower petals and many mantras. As our boat moved through the water we became surrounded

by these blessings. This image I have used many times as a visualization when giving a class of yoga nidra.

On another occasion during a satsang at Rikhia, Swami Satyananda said, 'Four thousand years ago you had Krishna, two thousand years ago you had Christ, now you have Niranjan!'

My heartfelt thanks go to Swamiji for everything that he has given to us as we look forward with prem to the next stage of his life."

The SWAN Theory

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

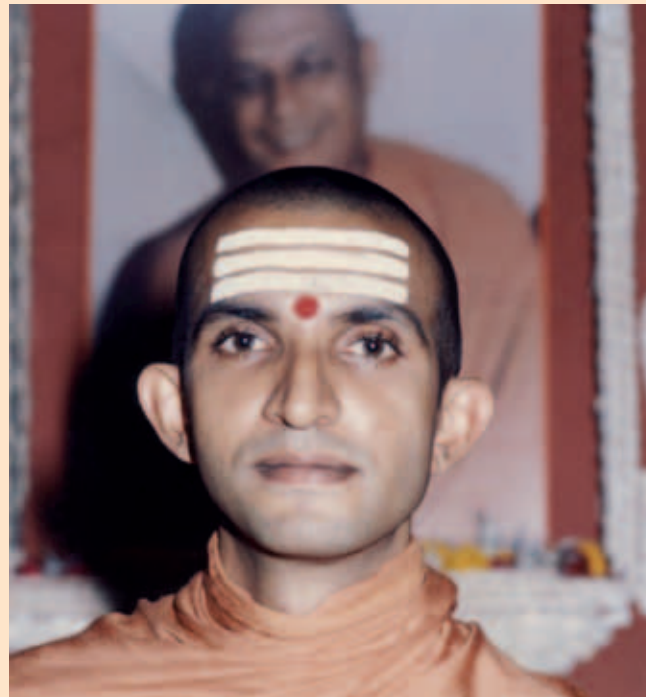
There are two paths in life. One path is known as *pravritti* – towards materialism, towards the senses, and the other path is *nivritti* – towards freedom, towards harmony. In our personality we have different attributes which pull us towards *pravritti* and also towards *nivritti*. The basic character of a human being on the sensorial path, *pravritti*, manifests as awareness of ambitions and limitations, whereas *nivritti*, the path of freedom, is characterized by awareness of needs and strengths. *Pravritti* is ambition and limitation. *Nivritti* is strength and need.

Instead of being driven by our ambitions, we should be driven by our needs. Instead of highlighting our limitations and weaknesses, we should be highlighting our positive strengths and qualities. With just this much change we can move from *pravritti*, sensorial bondage, or the state of technological hypnosis, towards freedom and a more natural life.

Although the process is simple, it is also very involved because we have never been trained to educate and discipline the mind. We are not able to look at ourselves. We are performers, what is known in Vedantic terminology as *bhokta*, enjoyer, *karta*, doer; we are not witnesses of the performance. Yoga says you have to be the *drashta*, the witness of what you do and enjoy, the witness of your actions.

The philosophy of yoga relates to the development of the human being, the expansion of human consciousness and the liberation of energies and potentials. We take birth in this body, but how do we understand life and how can we improve the quality of our life? The life we experience is an expression of our mind; we live according to the mandates of our mind. The philosophies we live and accept are ideas embedded in our mind.

Human beings have different predominant natures which alter the normal behavioural patterns of the mind. From the yogic perspective, the personality is governed by certain inherent qualities and strengths. The strengths are recognized as clarity of mind, willpower, awareness, concentration and understanding, and also as the application of wisdom, positivity and optimism. Strength of mind is discrimination,



knowing the difference between right and wrong. Positive and creative behaviour and attitudes reflect the natural strength of the personality and mind.

The other aspect concerns the weaknesses which control our mind more than the strengths. These weaknesses are fear, insecurity, inhibitions, clouded thinking, inappropriate behaviour, misunderstandings, self-centredness and ignorance. Normally, we are under the influence of the

weaknesses and lose contact with our inner strengths. Fears, insecurities and complexes manifest more often than optimistic and creative qualities.

Our behaviour is influenced by these weaknesses. The weaker the person, the more selfish they are. The stronger they are, the more selfless they are. If you are insecure, you try to create a self-image as a strong and optimistic person. The more you try to hold on to that identity to ensure that it is not disturbed by outside influences, the more self-centred and selfish you become. But if you are positive, optimistic, dynamic and creative, you have nothing to worry about. You are not the centre of your world, but only a participant in the greater picture of life. Then you become more selfless, as you are not holding on to a self-image.

Ambition is another important component. What are our ambitions and our needs? Is the role of ambition only to fulfil our needs and to give a sense of satisfaction and happiness? There are practical and impractical ambitions. Practical ambitions are based on our needs and the drive to achieve them. Impractical ambitions are based on our drive to become more powerful – a power game within ourselves. There are also needs alongside ambitions, but we are not able to distinguish between need and ambition. On one side, we have strengths and weaknesses and on the other, ambitions and needs. On one side, the weakness becomes predominant and we are not aware of our strengths. We become confused and do not know what to do or how to manage situations. On the other side, ambitions become predominant and we ignore many of our needs.

If you look at yourself objectively, you will find that your fears and insecurities represent your weaknesses, and your desire to become something in life represents your ambition. If you look at society, you will find that the hospitals, doctors, psychiatrists and psychoanalysts all deal with those areas of life where we have lost control. A good psychiatrist will help us to connect with our strength to overcome difficulties,

which indicates we have lost contact with the inherent inner strengths, positivity and optimism. We have also lost awareness of our needs, and we are simply chasing a mirage in search of happiness.

We have to live with this mind and use it to improve the quality of our life. Our discussion is not about how to manage our thoughts, emotions, desires or expectations, but rather how to manage the strengths, weaknesses, ambitions and needs which influence the nature of our personality, and govern the different expressions and manifestations of the mind. This is what I call the SWAN theory.

Practising the SWAN theory is the first step into meditation. Meditation begins with *ekagrata*, one-pointedness. It is the initial practice of meditation, whereas merger of the total mental experiences is the final state of meditation. The first state is mental or inner attention and the final is inner fusion. Inner attention is becoming attentive to those activities and experiences of which you become the witness. Therefore, the first step or stage leading to concentration is awareness, expanding the areas of perception. The act of becoming aware helps us to understand the behaviour of the vrittis.

How do you develop your awareness? How do you develop the ability to observe yourself? Awareness is not developed by thinking, “I’m aware of the environment” and looking around and at yourself. It is not developed by observing your breath, watching your thoughts, observing your emotions and sentiments or trying to express virtuous, positive qualities. Real awareness begins by recognizing and identifying four aspects: (i) your inherent strengths, (ii) the inherent weaknesses which restrict your growth, (iii) the aspirations and ambitions which motivate your actions, and (iv) your needs, based on the realities of life.

This can be explained in a slightly different way. If I ask you to become aware and observe – what you are becoming aware of or observing are the outer expressions and reactions of your

personality. If you observe your thoughts, you are watching the reactions of your mind manifesting. That is one way, but it does not fulfil the purpose. You can observe your thoughts, develop the ability to stop your thoughts, become blank in your mind, but that is not and should not be considered as an attainment. You can observe your feelings and emotions and try to improve their quality, but do not stop there and do not consider that to be the final attainment.

Attainment of awareness is when you have identified your strengths, weaknesses, aspirations and needs in your mind and you are able to live and behave appropriately. Many people practise meditation for thirty years, but do not know how to handle their weaknesses, how to express their



strengths and are unable to differentiate between their needs and ambitions. Without that level of awareness, meditation has no value.

Awareness, therefore, is the first step in realizing the human nature, the *swabhava*, which is governed by the cosmic nature, the *gunas*. That is the role of awareness. When you have identified and recognized your strengths, weaknesses, ambitions and needs, and you have been able to differentiate and discriminate between the fantasies and realities of life, then concentration begins, not before. That concentration is spontaneous; it does not involve any attempt to focus. In normal

terms, concentration means making an attempt to focus, but in the real sense concentration means the development of awareness leading to mental clarity, where there is absolutely no distraction or dissipation, and you are at peace with yourself. That is the meaning of meditation in the initial stage, for the management of *chitta vrittis*, mental modifications.

The *chitta vrittis* are also influenced and guided, not by desires, but by weaknesses. When the vrittis are guided by weaknesses, they are negative and destructive. When the vrittis are guided by strengths, they become rajasic and inspire dynamism and activity. When the vrittis are guided by needs, they can be either tamasic or rajasic. When the vrittis are guided by ambitions, again they can be coloured as either rajasic or tamasic. So once you are able to identify your own inner, subtle behaviour and recognize the vrittis, they can be managed with awareness, wisdom, discrimination and clarity. Only then do you become the witness, *drashta*, of yourself. That is when you become a non-participating, discriminative person. You are not aloof, but only act where you need to.

Along with self-observation, a transformation begins. You are able to differentiate between your aspirations and needs, your strengths and weaknesses, and you begin to identify with what is helpful for the development of your creativity. When you become aware of what will help you to improve, then you try to accept and live those principles which can be defined as sattwic, pious, pure, creative and positive. When you begin to live a state of meditation, when you begin to express that state of meditation through your actions in a positive, creative, dharmic way, then *sattwa* appears. *Sattwa* changes certain things in life, little by little.

Slowly we free ourselves from the conditionings of the mind and the habits of our personality, the energy is freed and consciousness expands. An attitudinal transformation comes about which leads to the natural expression of emotions and actions, which are now harmonious and balanced. We become established in wisdom and peace comes. ॐ



January

On the 29th Foundation Day of BSY, Swami Niranjan led the celebration with kirtan, havan, Narayan bhojan and satsang.

Swamis Omkarananda and Swayambhunath conducted a seminar for the Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Gujarat.

Sivadarshan Ashram, Raigarh, conducted courses in Ambikapur, Vishrampur Sector, Bhatgaon Sector, the Hasdeo Bango Project, Katghora, Bilaspur and the Officers' Club, Bakunthpur.

Swami Kaivalyananda and swamis from the Dhanbad unit conducted courses in Nagrik Sangha, Jharia, Bokaro, IOC Mourigram, the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre and Prempuri ashram, Mumbai.

February

Swami Niranjan conducted the Jabalpur Yoga Convention from the 25th to 28th. He was accompanied by 16 swamis who gave classes in various locations around Jabalpur.

March

Swami Niranjan inaugurated the Bhagalpur ashram

and conducted seminars at various locations in Bhagalpur with Swami Omkarananda.

April

Swami Niranjan conducted a yoga seminar in Ranchi from the 5th to 11th. Simultaneously, BSY swamis conducted classes in different locations around the city.

IYFM Branch, Patna, organized an eight-day yoga camp conducted by Swamis Swayambhunath and Ishwari from BSY.

May

Swami Niranjan conducted a seminar in Mumbai.

Swami Vibhooti from BSY conducted classes at the Biorama Trust Retreat held at Udamalpet, Tamil Nadu.



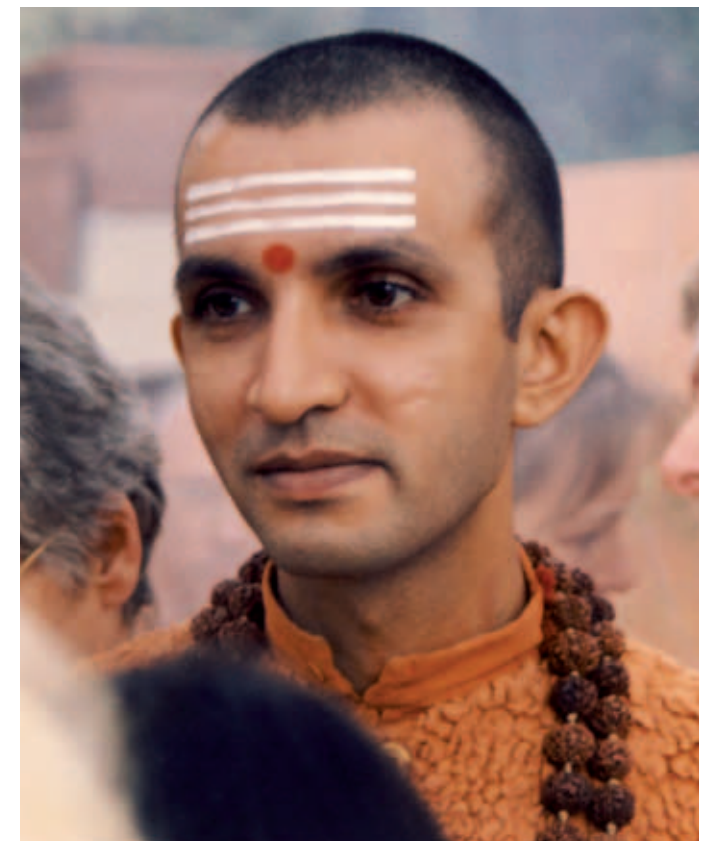
May–August

Lectures, seminars and satsangs were conducted in Italy at the Torino centre, and in Bolzano and Pergrine. Residential seminars and sadhana retreats were held at the residential Montescudo country retreat, including Guru Poornima celebrations conducted by Swamis Anandananda, Gurupoojananda and Shaktidhara, followed by a two-week residential seminar on kriya yoga.

June

Swamis from BSY travelled to Jamshedpur and conducted classes in five different locations from the 6th to the 13th.

Swami Satyadharma conducted a five-day intensive yoga program for Notre Dame Convent, Patna, from the 25th to 30th.



July

Swami Niranjan conducted a seminar at the Jamshedpur Yoga Centre on the 30th and 31st.

Swamis Satyadharma and Atmapoorna from BSY conducted a one-week course in Rajasthan for the National Thermal Power Corporation, near Kota, from the 11th to 17th.

Swamis Vigyanchaitanya and Bindunada from BSY conducted a yoga camp for IOC Gujarat Refinery from the 12th to 21st.

Swamis Kaivalyananda and Omkarananda conducted a yoga camp in Darbhanga, organized by the Satyananda Yoga Centre and the Sah Mithila Tantra Shodh Sansthan from the 19th to 24th.

In Australia, a Festival of Yoga was held in a National Park near Canberra. Yoga practitioners from all parts of Australia attended the program.

September–October

The annual yoga meeting of yoga teachers in Italy took place. After the inauguration of courses at the Torino Centre, a large group of Italian devotees and yoga practitioners departed for the Tyag Golden Jubilee celebrations in India.

November

The major event of 1993 was the Tyag Golden Jubilee World Yoga Convention from the 1st to 4th, which celebrated the 50th year of Swami Satyananda's renunciation. Swami Niranjan and Swami Chidananda of the Divine Life Society inaugurated the proceedings by lighting the flame of yoga above the dancing



musical fountain at Ganga Darshan, which commemorates Sri Swamiji's achievements. Many of BSY's new initiatives for applying yoga to help humankind were finalized. Swami Gyanprakash was nominated as the acharya of BSY. Many eminent scholars, spiritual personalities and artists gathered to present an inspiring program.



The highlight this year was the Tyag Golden Jubilee World Yoga Convention that was being celebrated to commemorate the 50th year of Swami Satyananda's renunciation and dedication to his guru, Swami Sivananda.

After spending the last few years in comparative seclusion, Swamiji was touring throughout India, inspiring people to attend the event. Swamiji's presence at the Jabalpur Convention was particularly memorable.

"You helped organize it, didn't you?" I asked Swami Shivaraj who has now become somewhat famous as the swami with wheels on his feet.

"Yes," he smiled, "It was a great success, but not in an expected way. There was a huge storm which completely wrecked the tent where the Convention was being held. Just as people began to panic, Swamiji began singing kirtan in the middle of the storm and the people of Jabalpur rose to the occasion and sang with him in pouring rain and ankle-deep waters. It was unforgettable."

Back in Munger, many participants of the sannyasa course stayed on to participate in the preparations for the convention. Even though the convention was scheduled to take place from November 1st to 4th, the preparations for a gathering of about 16,000 people from India and abroad kept us busy from the beginning of the year. It was a huge event. People who were





most involved in the pioneering work of spreading yoga practices throughout India and the world were invited to be part of the Yoga Charter.

“What is a Yoga Charter?” asked a tiny voice in the gathering that day.

“It’s a direction, an affiliation, spiritual and moral, between all the yoga centres,” I replied.

“How did Swamiji manage to accommodate those large numbers?” asked another listener.

“Oh he appeared to be doing everything effortlessly,” I replied.

“But how?” persisted the questioner. “In a town like Munger where you’re lucky to get an electricity supply six hours out of the twenty-four, how do you accommodate 16,000 people?”

Swami Shivaraj took the cue. “Most of them were Indian. We can adapt, we can sleep on the floor, we do not need special provisions. If the guru calls us, we can come and adapt

to whatever is necessary. Swamiji used the schools in Munger as hostels, and booked all the hotels, dharmashalas and rest houses for ten kilometres around Munger. Private houses were also used for guests and VIPs.”

“And the foreigners?”

“Swamiji can manage anything,” he asserted.

As the year progressed, Swamiji was focusing all his energies on organizing the convention. The registrations were pouring in from India and overseas. Among those who went back to their own countries after the course were also stirring up a lot of enthusiasm. “Did you see the article Swami Dayananda wrote in Australia?” I asked my friends.

The space around is living

“Sunsets in India remind me of the outback of Australia. They are larger than you could ever imagine. When the blazing circle sets, it seems so much bigger than before. A blood red eye on

the swelling sky. But you could face it and not be afraid. Its misty haze would soothe my gaze, like Uluru at dusk, when the day was lying down to night.

I would go looking for the sun after dinner. So still and calm in colour, it brushed past my brow, often painting wonder over worries which may have set in there. Sometimes I would see it as the moon, it was so serene. Large and close to me across the horizon, it could have been inside of me. My feeling was of intimacy. But it was its naturalness which kept me gazing strongly. It seemed to give expression to everything else around it. Sharpening the outlines of the ashoka trees and the geru silhouettes of swamis passing by. Always gleaming, soft and beautiful, those setting suns remind me always of Swami Niranjan.

He gives you so much space to be yourself. Yet he always shades you from over-exposure. Being near him was like living under a full moon. Everything around seemed total and complete. As if my emptiness had come alive. And yet I was always experiencing myself. Whether inside the silence from 6 pm to 6 am and during all meals, or flushing the dysentery of my personality in bouts of sickness, I was constantly having an experience of myself. The sun seemed shining in me always. Sometimes it was hot. I was aware of it burning me. And often I did want to run from it. But the only true escape led deeper into the way of working free. Which was why the course was crammed with karma yoga.

Swami Niranjan rarely intervened. He was just always there and open. Always doing his duty. Like soft light beaming without need of reason. This is the lot of a Paramahansa. One who is secure and settled in the life of spirit. He is already renounced to the naturalness of shining light. He lives the fullness of this attitude of sannyasa. He walks the path the swamis would aspire to.

My experience of Ganga Darshan has shown me that distance has no meaning sometimes. I would look across the Ganges from the window. I could sense it moving slow as sand. Beyond its banks the winds blew up desert storms. Yet the stillness of silence encased me alive with energy. I discovered choice and the power of its execution. Choosing to distance myself from my rampant

thoughts created space; to experience something else. I could look at the Ganges, and feel the universe to be holy. I was closer then, to Uluru. I am in Australia now. Swami Niranjana is as close to me as then. Distance has no meaning when nothing is at stake."

Swami Niranjana was going to give satsang that evening and it was my job to read out the questions people had given. There was one among them that caught my eye. So that evening, as the fragrance of Jyoti Mandir wafted about, I read out: "Swamiji, in his books, Swami Satyananda has often said that your birth was the result of sadhana and that you were born for a specific mission. What is that mission?"

Swamiji looked at me quizzically, as though he knew I wasn't merely reading this question for someone else. It's funny the way his eyes can make you look at yourself.

"What do you expect me to say to that?" he asked quite sharply. "You expect me to say, 'Yes, I was born with a mission and my mission is such and such?' No, those people who have achieved something in their lives didn't do so by words. Their lives speak of their mission. We learn what their mission was by looking at their whole life. Ask the next question."

"Swamiji," I began, glancing hastily at the next piece of paper, "Why do we chant Om three times and the Shanti Path at the beginning of a yoga class?"

"Oh no, he's going to hit the roof," I thought nervously, but no. He smiled serenely and again began patiently explaining, "In yoga we aim at harmonizing and uniting the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of an individual . . ."

It was a couple of months after that satsang that the young enquirer and I again picked up our conversation. "So how did the year progress?" she asked.

I rummaged through my memory again. "People had begun streaming into Munger and all the detailed arrangements had to be finalized. Delegates from overseas had been coming in ever increasing numbers since the end of September. Because they were all going to stay in Ganga Darshan itself,

the swamis were crowded into shared rooms, offices, the library and spare corners.

"Early arrivals got rooms, though always shared, sometimes with six to eight people. The later arrivals found themselves in groups of twenty or thirty, sleeping on the floors of the teaching halls or in the rooms where offices usually functioned, but a truly amazing attitude of adjustment, cleanliness and cooperation was prevailing. Everyone seemed happy just to be present and put aside comfort in order to be part of this spiritual gathering.

"The vast majority of people did not arrive till 29th October – but then each train and bus brought its contingent and accommodation filled fast. Guest speakers were ushered to their rooms and told of the stage, speaking arrangements, etc. The

press and TV were catered for. The Sahay family from Bhagalpur began preparing wonderful food for us all.

"Many well-known personalities from diverse fields participated in the convention. Many sent their good wishes as messages for the convention. Among them was Ramanand Sagar, the film producer who took Indian television by storm with his series on the *Ramayana*."

Yoga is the greatest of all sciences

"Yoga is the science of action. Like science, it talks in exact terms – 'Do this and this will happen.' There is no ambiguity about it, neither is there any vagueness of thought. It doesn't depend upon the help or goodwill of any deity. It depends upon the result of one's own actions (karma) – physical, mental or spiritual."



Any kind of yogic action done in proper forms and conditions must get the described result. For example, if you really attain the aparigraha bhava, then you must get the power to see through the bowels of the earth. You will be able to see where there is a gold mine, a diamond mine, oil or anything. If you

you may come across a great yogi on the Indian soil every now and then.

One such bright star of yoga in the present world is Paramahansa Swami Satyananda who established the Bihar School of Yoga in Munger. Here he has worked for the last thirty



attain that stage, then nature has no need to hide anything from you.

This is yoga – it is the bridge between the physical and the metaphysical world – the bridge between this life and the life after death.

Indian yogis have been the masters of this science. Unfortunately, it is almost impossible to find such masters in the present day world. Still, like a bright star in the dark sky

years trying to uplift the backward and downtrodden people of that remote land.

It is a matter of prestige for India that a World Yoga Convention is being organized in Munger with the theme 'Integration of Yoga and Science in the 21st Century'. It could as well be 'Revelation of Yoga as Science in the 21st Century'.

I look forward to this convention with great hope for the entire mankind."

General B. C. Joshi, Chief of Army Staff, was another well-known personality at the convention. An old associate and well-wisher of Sri Swamiji, this was the message of support he sent.

A refreshing synergy

"I am delighted to learn that the Bihar School of Yoga, Munger, is organizing a World Yoga Convention from 1st to 4th November 1993 as part of the celebrations to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Swami Satyananda's attaining sannyasa.

Swami Satyananda is an intellectual giant who has striven to synthesize the essential import of our traditions in yoga and meditation with the so-called rationality of modern science. This synergy is directed towards evolving systems and disciplines which contribute substantially to the improvement of the quality of life of all adherents. A laudable aspect of Swamiji's novel and refreshing approach is the thrust to uplift the rural, underprivileged and tribal communities. This fulfils a crying need in India's march towards long-awaited resurgence.

It is only appropriate that the theme of the proposed seminar is 'Integration of Yoga and Science in the 21st Century', an issue which holds promise not only for a better India but a more harmonious globe.

The horizons of scientific knowledge have widened immensely but the essential rationality of the concepts developed by Swamiji remains unchanged. Indeed, Swamiji is a modern yogi with a message so relevant and beneficial in modern times.

I convey my best wishes to the organizers and participants of the World Yoga Convention and hope that their deliberations will bring out useful contributions to propagate the core philosophy of Swami Satyananda."

Swami Niranjan was the eye at the centre of this storm of activity. Swami Chidanandaji from the Divine Life Society gave the inaugural speech on 30th October. He lit the 'Flame of Yoga' and a fountain clad in many coloured lights danced to the music which opened the wonders of the Convention. The theme of the convention, fittingly, was 'Integration of Science and Yoga in the 21st Century'. There

were many eminent scholars, spiritual personalities and artists who gathered to present an inspiring program, including A.R. Kidwai, Governor of Bihar; Swami Poonyananda Giri, Acharya Mahamandaleshwar, Niranjani Akhara, Varanasi; Swami Vidyananda Giri, Acharya Mahamandaleshwar, Kailash Ashram, Rishikesh; Swami Rasajananda, Ramakrishna Mission, Kolkata; Sri Ramananda Brahmachari, Agni Akhara, Varanasi; Swami Parameshwarananda Saraswati, Kailash Ashram, Rishikesh; Prof U.P. Baxi, Vice-Chancellor, Delhi University; Gen B.C. Joshi, COAS, Delhi; Sri A. Kumar, Vice-Chancellor, Bhagalpur University; Dr H.S. Wasir, AIIMS, Delhi; Dr H.R. Nagendra, Director, Vivekananda Kendra, Bangalore; Dr M.D. Bhole, Director, Kaivalyadhama, Lonavala, Pune; Dr P. Jha, Yoga Institute, Lonavala, and many others.

Swami Satyananda sent a message that was read at the beginning of the Convention.

Rikhia
Aug 29th '93

Nirajan, Namō Narayan.

I send my good wishes for the convention. You call it 'Tyag Jayanti'. I call it 'Samarpan Muhurta', the moment of dedication. It was that time, an auspicious moment in my life, which I experienced fifty years ago in the divine presence of my Guru – Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj.

To this day, I have always remembered it as a great moment of dedication. You will be able to help the movement of yoga and rededicate yourself to the great cause of human evolution.

Satyananda

The morning of 1st November began with the thousands of delegates going to early morning class in the marquee, enjoying breakfast, attending a very well orchestrated morning session where eminent speakers gave their best. Lunch went smoothly. November had been chosen, amongst other things,

for its weather – cool, dry and healthy, so the discomforts of crowded conditions would be minimized. What were those clouds doing?

Unbelievably, during the first speech of the afternoon session the sky opened, thunder crashed and rain poured down as though the Ganga was pouring upon us from Shiva's locks. Like many swamis, I had not seen much of the program, being occupied in background arrangements – which were



now abruptly curtailed by an absolute deluge of rain heavier than the monsoon! Perched under an awning, keeping bits of paper dry, I was suddenly joined by one drenched and excited swami.

"It was wonderful!"

"What?"

"The sky just opened up – the big pandal tent was on the point of collapsing, all the video equipment was drenched. For a moment I thought all the people might stampede from the tent in fear of it collapsing on top of them, then Swamiji jumped up and began kirtan. Instantly everything was transformed. It developed into Chaitanya kirtan and we were all singing and dancing in the rain and holding up the pandal. It was a wonderful experience."

Other people were arriving now, and all with the same story. They felt the storm and Swamiji's response uplifted them from the normal circumstances and state of mind into another dimension of experience. That night some of our accommodations had to be evacuated because the rain found its way in. The food tents crashed down. The big marquee had to be re-pitched and dry



straw and new seating installed and put inside. Everything was done and ready by morning. Swamiji supervised the tent's restoration and the new arrangement of speakers, etc., gave satsang and continued work on the blueprint of the Yoga Charter for the International Yoga Fellowship.

For three days the program continued under steady rain which slowed to occasional cloudbursts, but always the steady guidance and strong will of Swamiji prevailed. The discipline, inspiration and the arrangements of the previous months held good. The speeches made at the convention have been recorded in the book *Yoga Sagar*.

On the evening of the last day of the convention word went around Munger town that all were welcome, free of charge. About 70,000 people by police estimates, converged on the Polo Ground from the surrounding Munger district. The security people and police declared the situation out of control and

cancelled the program. Overseas delegates and residential Indian delegates were informed that they could not go to the program, or leave Ganga Darshan.

Swami Niranjan had arranged to give mantra, jignasu and karma sannyasa initiations during the evening as many people had booked trains and flights that evening and the following morning. Several hundred people were waiting – Jyoti Mandir was overfull and the crowd had spilled out on to the lawn. When news of the events and the huge crowd of people gathered in the Polo Ground reached Swamiji, he postponed the initiations to the following morning and went to face the potentially dangerous task of calming the huge disappointed crowd, which filled not only the entire marquee but the whole Polo Ground and the approach roads.

Swamiji threaded his way through the crowds to the stage and spoke to them of the success of the Golden Jubilee

Convention, thanked them for their part in it and reminded them that the eyes of the world were on Munger which was now re-established as a spiritual centre in India. After having darshan and hearing the inspiring words of Swamiji, whom they had taken to their hearts, the thousands of devotees sang kirtan and, for the most part, the people of Munger town and the surrounding villages went home happily enough without the need of any formal arrangements.

Far beyond midnight, again, Swamiji's kutir was filled with people who had travelled great distances to see and speak with him. Before dawn he began initiating those who had been able to stay on, and this continued throughout the next three days.

A memorable ceremony during the convention was the performance of the vedic Sudarshan Yajna, propitiating Vishnu, the sustainer of the universe. Acharyas of Sringeri Math had specially arrived to perform the ritual. On completion of the yajna, poorna kumbha abhisheka of Swami Niranjan was performed. He was bathed with the waters collected from oceans, rivers and tirthas and in which medicinal and tantric herbs had been steeped throughout the ceremonies. The water was also charged with the mantras chanted during the yajna. The abhisheka was performed as recognition of Swamiji as successor to Swami Satyananda. Swami Vidyananda Giri, Acharya of Kailash Ashram, Rishikesh, presented a *chadar*, cloth of honour, to Swamiji consecrating the occasion.

As the huge number of resident guests departed, we were left with the help of many volunteers from Munger district who again tidied up the schools, replaced furniture, collected bedding and so forth. Overseas and interstate guests who were staying helped to sort out BSY and Ganga Darshan itself.

A huge wave of energy had been generated in the closing weeks of 1993. We knew that Swamiji meant to put that energy to good use. It was for this reason he had drawn up the Charter for IYFM. He had also challenged each of the Indian delegates to dedicate just fifteen days of their entire life to projects within India which he was in the process of planning.

For a while, things seemed quiet around the ashram. Then the next wave started building as the new consciousness and energy generated by the convention materialized. Many people were wanting to meet Swami Niranjan and apply his teachings. There was an increasing demand for guidance from within India and also from overseas devotees and organizations. In response to this, a Charter for the International Yoga Fellowship Movement, which had been drawn up during the Convention in consultation with the world leaders present at that time, was drafted. Swami Gyansagar had been assisting Swami Niranjan in that work, so he can give an overview.

International Yoga Fellowship Movement Charter

“Essentially it is a charter of global yogic aims for universal harmony which was introduced for all sannyasins and disciples of Swami Satyananda during the World Yoga Convention.

The charter was established by Swami Niranjanananda to coordinate yogic activities and projects throughout the world. Its central body is an International Coordinating Committee comprised of representatives from all the major Satyananda Yoga Centres in Europe, North and South America, India, South-East Asia and Australia. The charter’s main purposes are:

- 1. To allow a pathway for new yogic directions and inspirational ideas to flow from Swami Satyananda into the community and society at large for the upliftment and evolution of humanity;*
- 2. To pull together the ideas and projects from small local groups and village communities regarding the uses of yoga in education, health and therapy, seva, service to others and mind and body research. The charter will provide a forum for support and encouragement for valuable new ideas growing out of our ever-increasing knowledge and experience of yoga;*
- 3. To provide a forum of regulation and standardization in yoga teaching and activity in order to maintain the highest quality of understanding and respect for the tradition of yoga, especially with regard to the names and trademarks associated with Sri Swamiji’s work.”*

After the actual Convention had finished, we found that a whole new surge of inspiration began. What we focused on more was the new perception, perhaps most succinctly phrased by Sri AR Kidwai from Raj Bhavan in Patna, who remarked that BSY now had the resources to start a yoga university as had been done in the past at Vikramshila and Nalanda in Bihar. We sensed that some great confluence of energies and a new level of consciousness were arising from all these events.

Swami Dharmashakti can perhaps best put the convention in the perspective of a continued line of inspiration which has guided





the lives of Paramguru Swami Sivananda, Swami Satyananda and Swami Niranjanananda.

The Triveni Sangam of yoga

“During a satsang on Ganga Darshan campus, the recent World Yoga Convention was being discussed. Swami Niranjan was saying, ‘Sri Swamiji’s life was marked out in cycles of 20 years’ duration, and my life contains 11-year cycles. At the age of 11, I went abroad. At 22 I came back to take over the responsibility of the Munger ashram. At 33 my life and work will

undergo another change.’ Further he said, ‘In 1973 Sri Swamiji celebrated the Golden Jubilee of his guru, Swami Sivananda’s renunciation. In 1993 we celebrated the Golden Jubilee of our guruji’s renunciation.’

Reminiscences came to my mind. What a perfect 20-year cycle the Lord has ordained! In 1953, Bhumandaleswar Swami Sivananda hosted a ‘World Dharma Convention’. The times called for special knowledge of dharma. In 1973, Paramahansa Satyananda hosted the ‘World Yoga Convention’. The world needed the knowledge of yoga. Swami Niranjan hosted the ‘World Yoga Convention’ in 1993. The time is now ripe for the union of yoga and dharma. This convention will go down in history as the ‘Triveni Sangam of Yoga’.

In the village of Pattamadai, South India, in the family of a Shiva devotee, a son was born – Lord Shiva incarnate. The child, Kuppuswami, showed a great love for the poor and was loved by all. An ideal student, he sailed through all the stages of education with flying colours and topped in the MBBS degree of medicine. Thereafter, he went to Malaya and began to serve the poor and the needy.

After ten years of social welfare service, he came back to India in 1923, full of vairagya and desiring salvation. He went to Kashi for the darshan of Baba Vishwanath (Shiva) and then to Rishikesh. There he distributed the fruits that he received as alms to the poor, and bought medicines with the money that people gave him as alms, distributing them to the needy. The chapatti that people gave him was his meal dipped in Ganga water and shared with others. He was in constant contemplation of guru.

One day, as he was lost in thought beside the Ganga, a divine shakti gave him guru diksha. When his trance lifted, the guru had disappeared. He kept on searching, and following divine orders. Finally, in Rishikesh on 1st June, 1924, he was given sannyasa diksha into the Dashnami parampara, the ten classes of ascetics of the Shankaracharya tradition, by Swami Vishwananda Saraswati, belonging to Sringeri Math.



Swami Sivananda Saraswati, as he was now called, engrossed himself in tapasya and the sadhana of service until 1930. He toured the Himalayas, Kanya Kumari and Rameshwaram, spreading the message of bhagavat dharma, dharma pertaining to God. He travelled on foot up to Kailash Mansarovar. In 1935, he gained the inner knowledge and began to question the goal and aim of his life, wondering whether it would be judicious to remain a wanderer. He went to stay in an old cowshed on Muni ki Reti, and in April 1936 founded the Divine Life Society for the reawakening of vedic education

and worldwide propagation of spiritual knowledge. For social service he opened a charitable hospital.

He received divine assistance. The maharaja of Tehri Garhwal, impressed by his ideals, donated a hilly area of 200 acres, on which the Sivananda Ashram stands today. Thereafter there was no dearth of donors. Swami Sivananda's hut, however, remained in the cowshed. He founded the 'Sivananda Publication Association' in 1938 for the promotion of spiritual literature. Many monthly magazines in Hindi and English began to be published. He received assistance from disciples who were like divinity in human form.

Sitting beside the Ganges in a solitary hut, the maharishi, great sage, spread happiness to the entire world. He wrote about 400 books which have been studied by thousands of people all over the world. The testimony of his message spread all over the globe in the form of these books and magazines. In April 1953 Swami Sivananda Maharaj organized a 'World Dharma Conference' in Rishikesh, which was attended by representatives of all countries. Leaders of all religions declared the unity of all religions under the leadership of Paramguru Swami Sivananda. This was an historic event.

Coincidentally, my husband and I reached Swami Sivanandaji's doors at the time of the 'World Dharma Conference'. We were very impressed upon meeting this saint. After reading his literature, we learned that if a man is truly eager for a guru, he finds the right one at the right time. We received his blessings. We realized the knowledge of the eternal light and perceived the darkness. The night came to an end, because as a symbol of his blessings, we received a lodestar in the form of Swami Satyananda, at whose feet we have found light.

The life of Swami Satyananda is as simple as that of a small child. He toured all over the country and abroad, his personality impressing kings and beggars alike. There was a time when he wandered as an ascetic from place to place, unsure of food or shelter, which were hard to come by. Even then, he would look like the king of kings. On a number of occasions, we toured

unfamiliar places with him. We learned and understood a lot during these trips.

In his life we have seen a tremendous strength of determination. He could crush a mountain or drink an ocean if he set his mind to it. On the basis of this strength, he started a worldwide yoga movement, which has spread all over the globe. In April 1956 Swami Satyananda stepped out of his guru's ashram with his blessings to conquer the world. He started alone, but his caravan became progressively bigger.

After his guru, Swami Sivananda, attained mahasamadhi, in accordance with his orders, Swami Satyananda established a 'Sivananda Ashram' on the banks of the river Ganga in Munger. He lit the akhanda jyoti, eternal flame, of yoga. At the ashram, people of all religions, castes and social levels began to learn yoga. The aim was to disseminate, without any bias, the knowledge of the entire process of sadhana, and provide physical and mental health, along with spiritual upliftment, all on a scientific basis. The area of work continued to expand



and people from all continents came pouring in. Yoga camps were held in towns and villages, new ashrams were started and research into various diseases began.

The science of yoga is the ancient Indian treasury of knowledge which has resurfaced and is relevant in today's atomic age as it was in the golden age of the rishis. As with all other sciences, new research continues to take place and additions are made. In a short span of time Swami Satyananda managed to set up a number of ashrams and institutions in India and abroad, hold conferences, yoga courses, kriya yoga courses, teacher training courses and sannyasa training courses. At the 'World Yoga Convention' held in 1973, 10,000 people came from India and abroad. The Shankaracharya of

Joshimath, Swami Shantanandaji Maharaj, inaugurated the event. Saints, bhaktas, yogis, rishis, sadhakas, disciples, guru brothers of Swami Satyananda and people from every country, state and town turned up. For a week, every tree and leaf in Munger seemed to come alive.

Hundreds of Sri Swamiji's books have been published in Hindi and English, often becoming in short supply immediately after publication. When the world has become blind towards the eternal truth and is groping for a way in the dark ignorance of materialism, Swami Satyananda has appeared as a beacon of light. He stands on the frightening waves of the ocean of the world, with siddhis prostrating themselves at his feet. But this tapasvi saint has no time for them. His goal was for no man



in the world to remain unhappy and for yoga to reach every home and continue for centuries. To complete this mission is the resolve of Swami Niranjan.

On January 19, 1983, Swami Satyananda handed over his entire responsibilities to 23-year-old Swami Niranjan. The obedient disciple accepted the orders of his guru. The disciples and bhaktas and well-wishers of Swami Satyananda have seen that all the activities of Ganga Darshan are continuing as before. Swami Satsangi says, 'It is an immense task to set up an institution, but selecting a competent successor to uphold and maintain the ideals and standards of the institution is no less important.'



Visitors to Ganga Darshan see with amazement that the guru has remained in the ashram in the form of his disciple. All the work, such as meeting people from everywhere, helping solve their problems, holding yoga therapy and teacher training courses, is proceeding as before. The guru, satisfied with the hard work and ability of his worthy disciple, is engrossed in hard tapasya, while for the disciple, there is nothing but the guru's name and work. Swami Niranjana is lifting the Dronachal mountain like Hanumanji did. Dharma, karma, service and research are the effulgent healing herbs.

I have had the opportunity to witness these three yajnas, the 'World Dharma Convention' of Swami Sivananda in 1953, the 'World Yoga Convention' of Swami Satyananda in 1973 and the 'Tyag Golden Jubilee World Yoga Convention' of Swami Niranjana in 1993. By the grace of the guru and the Lord, it was the ashwamedha yajna with the full cooperation of the residents of Munger as well as all those associated with the ashram. Fortunate indeed are those who have bathed in the Triveni of the three conventions."

Swami Dharmashakti's image of bathing in the Triveni of the conventions came alive for us in December, after the convention work was concluded and the ashram was returning to 'normal'. Swami Niranjana arranged for all the swamis and

those guests who remained to go to Bheem Bandh river. This healing and revitalizing river emerges steaming hot from the ground and runs through a forest which has been preserved as a national park. As we eased our frozen bodies from the bus and emerged into the silence and fragrance of the forest, the slanting rays of early morning light shimmered through the mists of steam rising from the river's surface.

Within minutes we had thawed into the relaxing waters, letting go finally of all the stresses and tensions that had built up during the months of preparation and hard work entailed by the convention. After playing in the pools and waterfalls, singing kirtan and sharing prasada everyone felt renewed, and ready for the new year and its challenges.



Tantra and Yoga

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

The theme before us today is tantra and yoga. Tantra has often been sold in the West as the science of sexuality; however, from the eastern perspective, it is the science of evolution in life. It is believed that the philosophy of tantra was originally explained by Shiva to Shakti. When Shakti wanted to know how human beings could find satisfaction and fulfilment in their strife-filled world, Shiva replied that there are two ways of living in the world, one of struggle and the other of surrender. Those who walk the first path believe that they are the centre of the universe, and are always searching for control, power and ways to manipulate their environment. There is always struggle and clash of intentions on that path. But on the other path, you simply become an instrument being played by the cosmic power. You become empty like a flute so that divine grace flows through you. Struggle, conflict and confusion come if there are blockages in the personality. But if one can free oneself from the mental, psychological and emotional blockages and dissipations, then surrender takes place naturally.

Shakti again asked Shiva, how can we understand this process of letting go of our attachments to our fixed beliefs, concepts and mentality? Shiva answered that this entire universe, the entire creation, is a play of consciousness and energy, which has to be tapped in order for us to become free. And this is the idea from which tantra evolves. 'Tantra' comes from two words: *tanoti*, denoting the expansion and experience of consciousness, and *trayati*, meaning liberating and releasing the dormant *shakti*, or energy.

Shakti now asked Shiva, where does this consciousness or energy reside in the body? Shiva said, there is no part of the body and no place of the universe and creation which does not contain consciousness or energy, they impregnate the entire creation. Each cell in the body contains consciousness and energy. Consciousness is not limited to the brain; even the cells in the little toe have the same consciousness which is active in the brain. This consciousness is not intelligence; it is pure consciousness, which is experienced in the form of life and existence. You cannot locate the brain in a tree, but it is alive. And that life is an interplay

between consciousness and energy. We think of consciousness in the form of intelligence, but consciousness is experienced at many different levels. We are not able to experience the pure level of consciousness because our consciousness is tainted and coloured by many things. Therefore, what is called evolution, from the tantric perspective is actually specialization. This can be understood through the theory of kundalini yoga.



In kundalini yoga, the highest chakra, sahasrara, is at the crown of the head and the lowest chakra, mooladhara, is at the base of the spine. Sahasrara represents the pure, untainted, uncoloured consciousness and mooladhara represents the conditioned, manifest consciousness. So the transcendental consciousness and transcendental shakti have actually stepped down and conditioned themselves to exist in the material, sensorial world.

Just as there are different step-down transformers between a power station and our home so that the raw electric power can be brought down to a level where it can be used efficiently, in our life the chakras represent the step-down transformers. The highest generation point of transcendental consciousness and energy is sahasrara. When they go through a step-down transformer at this level, the transcendental quality of consciousness and energy are now defined in the form of mind at ajna chakra. Ajna chakra is the finite expression of consciousness and energy, whereas sahasrara is the transcendental, infinite expression. Sahasrara represents the universal whereas ajna represents

the individual mind. This individuality has to manifest at some place, and it does so through the different *tattwas*, elements, by limiting itself more and more. So at the next level, vishuddhi chakra, energy and consciousness are further limited by the first tattwa, *akasha*, the space element. They take the form of space, which becomes the container of creation. At anahata, energy and consciousness are further limited and become the cause of the birth of the *vayu tattwa*, the air element. At manipura the *agni tattwa*, the fire element, is generated. At swadhisthana the *apas tattwa*, the water element, comes into existence. At the lowest level, mooladhara chakra, the final condensation takes place in the form of matter, the *prithvi tattwa*.

In tantra, Shakti is symbolized by an inverted triangle; it denotes that the broad, expansive, transcendental experience has come to a point, to matter. Just as in academic study, specialization follows broad based study, similarly we have specialized in material existence, and our mind, thoughts, sentiments and expressions are connected with the senses and the environment. Therefore, I said that tantra does not see life as evolution, but rather as specialization. Our evolution begins once we come to this material plane. Evolution means starting from the bottom and going to the top whereas specialization means starting at the top with a very broad base and coming down to a point.

There are two aspects of tantra. The first is the theory which is broad based and explains where we are in this life. The second includes the practices which take us from here into the transcendental. The tantric theory deals with how this broad based consciousness and energy have come to a point and specialized in the form of life, creation and sensorial experience. The practical aspect of tantra deals with how we can begin from where we are to develop and evolve. In the process of specialization, coming down from above to below, Shakti, energy, separated from Shiva, consciousness. In tantra, creation can only happen if there is separation of consciousness and energy. So there has to be union of Shakti, now at the gross, material level, with the transcendental Shiva in sahasrara. Shakti has to be raised from mooladhara back up to sahasrara where it can unite with consciousness.

The Shakti in mooladhara is called kundalini. One definition of kundalini is the power which is bound by the three qualities

of sattwa, rajas and tamas. Kundalini is generally viewed symbolically as a serpent in three and a half coils. *Kundal* means coil, and *kundalini* means coiled energy. The three coils represent the bondage of the material world, tamas, rajas and sattwa. Energy is subject to the influence of these three *gunas*, qualities, that govern our life. The other definition of kundalini is derived from *kunda*, meaning pit, which can be conceived as an inverted triangle. Kundalini is the energy which has come down into the pit, from the transcendental to the finite state. So kundalini yoga is a practice of tantra in which, through our sadhana, we try to raise this energy from mooladhara to sahasrara. And it is this kundalini, this power or energy that yoga and tantra are concerned with.

Chakras and kundalini are symbolic representations of the different conditions in human life. Physiologically, the chakras are nerve plexuses in the body, connected to the brain, so awakening of a nerve plexus activates the corresponding centre in the brain. Therefore, when you practice kundalini yoga, you can experience a transformation or awakening within your own personality which is also physiological. This transformation at the physical level also transforms an individual's spiritual and psychic qualities, so we acquire greater balance, harmony and tranquillity within. As we progress from the pit of kundalini upwards, our mind and consciousness become more expansive. So kundalini yoga becomes a practice of the tantras.

What we call God is a transcendental reality, unconditional, constant and infinite, while life is a conditioned state of existence. From the transcendental state, we have transformed and mutated to our level of existence. This is specialization of energy from nothing into something specific. From this level of conditioned existence, we now have to free ourselves from the inner and outer conditionings which restrict our total expression. This freedom is known as mukti, nirvana or moksha. At present we are separate from our inner self and there has to be union. This union is the subject matter of tantra.

Let us take an example. Let us consider that we are a plug, and there are two sockets before us, worldly and spiritual. Our individual plug is at present connected to the worldly socket. The three holes in the socket represent tamas, rajas and sattwa. The

individual self is connected with the material, external, sensorial qualities of tamas, rajas and sattwa. The current running through us is coming from these connections. Even when we meditate, it is this external, material current flowing through us, not the spiritual current. No matter what we do, the current is always coming from the outer world. The spiritual current is not yet tapped. To connect to the spiritual current, we have to first extract our plug from the worldly socket and put it in the spiritual socket. Then the spiritual current will flow through and the entire perspective will change. In the first connection we are a part of the world, in the second connection the world becomes a part of us.



Mystical concepts cannot be experienced while we are connected to the material dimension. I have not seen anybody make the effort to even loosen that material connection, let alone extract oneself completely and plug into the other socket. People want to have good experiences in their sadhana, practice and meditation, but we are unable to manage the basic reactions that influence us. We are obsessively connected with the material and sensorial dimensions of life. It is indeed very difficult to detach completely, but at least we can become aware of our connection with the world and manage it more effectively. We have to put in safety systems, a surge protector, between the plug and the socket so there is no short-circuit in life. And that surge protector is known as awareness. If you are aware, you can observe, analyze, become the *drashta*, the witness of your connection with the world, then you are a yogi. There are some rare people who have the strength to disconnect their plug from the material socket and connect

with the spiritual socket. They are siddhas. So don't aspire to be a siddha, but aspire to be a yogi.

Patanjali conveys this idea in the *Yoga Sutras*. Chitta vritti is the current of the world flowing into you. To manage the chitta vrittis, you become the witness by cultivating awareness. Patanjali made yama and niyama the first two stages of yoga so that the negative personality traits could be transformed into positive strengths. When the interactive behaviour pattern between the individual and the world is harmonized, you move into pratyahara, into dharana and into dhyana. How you conduct yourself, manage your expressions and reactions, constitutes the training of the yamas and niyamas. So there are five yogic rules of conducts, five yamas or yogic disciplines and five niyamas or efforts.

Tantra also says there are five conducts, *achara*, to experience freedom and transcendence: siddhantachara, yogachara, vedachara, dakshinachara and vamachara. *Siddha* means perfect, *anta* means end, *achara* means conduct, so *siddhantachara* means a conduct which has a positive, perfect end. Siddhanta also means philosophy or theory. The process of specialization, the Shakti triangle, and the process of evolution is siddhanta, which has a perfect beginning and a perfect end. Siddhanta means understanding the theory of how we have come into existence and how to go from this point back to our source. Siddhantachara is understanding our connection with the universe. Knowing, understanding, experiencing and realizing constitute the path of siddhantachara.

The second conduct in tantra is *vedachara*, appropriate behaviour, thinking and action. There has to be appropriateness in our relationships, thinking, performance, behaviour and understanding. It also means being able to see oneself clearly and not creating a false identity. To achieve this, we need to cultivate wisdom in life. Wisdom is an integral component of appropriateness. Our self-deluded self-esteem can only be counteracted through wisdom; it is the antidote to delusion. So acquisition of wisdom is the beginning of appropriate understanding, thinking and action. Through vedachara we discover how to live appropriately, using wisdom, cultivating understanding and harmonizing our environment.

The third conduct in tantra is *yogachara*, yogic effort, through which we bring health and wellbeing into our lives. Health means awareness of the underlying harmony between the body, mind, emotions, psyche, ethics and spirituality. Health is learning to manage disease more effectively and efficiently, and being able to see it as an opportunity. Wellbeing is also an experience of wholeness and contentment in life. And yoga has a very comprehensive system to bring about awareness of personal health.

The above three conducts can be practised by all types of people. Tantra says there two kinds of people in the world, the attached who are involved in the world, and the non-attached, renunciates, who have the ability to let go when necessary. Renunciation is not leaving family and friends and going someplace else, but letting go of the desires, obsessions, expectations, beliefs and ideas which make up our identity. The moment we let go of the things that bind us to a gross level, we enter the dimension of yoga. It is like the potato that must let go of its natural state of hardness and allow itself to be boiled to become soft and edible. This process of self-softening is renunciation.

The fourth conduct, *dakshinachara*, the right-hand path of tantra, is for the non-attached, spiritually awakened people who are aware they can disconnect from the world whenever they want to. It is for those who are liberated or striving for freedom from their desires, expectations and ambitions and want to experience the transcendental nature within. The common sadhana for the right-hand path is mantra, yantra and meditation. Mantra pacifies the normal behavioural patterns of the mind and generates an altered state where you are connected with inner strength, clarity and positivity. The mind, thought, feeling, emotion and words are manifestations or energetic emissions of consciousness. Mantra helps to focus these energies of consciousness by stopping the dissipations and connecting you with your inner self and inner strength.

In tantra, Shiva, consciousness, is symbolized by a normal triangle and Shakti by an inverted triangle. In sahasrara chakra, consciousness is focused, one-pointed and contained; in creation it begins to dissipate and enlarge at the bottom. At the material

level, consciousness is dissipated and at the spiritual or higher level, consciousness is concentrated. So when we begin mantra practice, we are working at the dissipated state of consciousness. Mantra helps to focus the energies of consciousness and eventually brings us to the point where the concentrated, unified consciousness can be experienced and attained. So mantra acts at the level of consciousness and the interactive mind. Yantra



is the second sadhana that works at the level of energy. Yantra is a map of the manifestations of energy at different levels. For example, the tradition describes Sri Yantra as the city where Shakti resides. Through meditation, the mantra and yantra can be realized by people who are non-attached.

The fifth conduct of tantra, *vamachara*, the left-hand path, is for those involved in the world. Why are these two conducts called left and right? The right represents *pingala nadi*, the solar force, the masculine force or Shiva energy, and the left represents *ida nadi*, the lunar force, the mental force, the power of Shakti. When we practise sadhanas of the right-hand path, we are

able to access subtle layers of consciousness. Mahamrityunjaya mantra, Gayatri mantra and the meditations we practise all belong to the right-hand path of tantra. The left-hand path deals with awakening the dormant energies.

In tantric symbology, Shiva is seen as *Ardhanarishwara*, half female and half male. It is a state of existence and experience where both poles are in perfect balance, half lunar, the feminine force, and half solar, the masculine force. Shiva is on the right side, representing the male principle, and Shakti is on the left side, representing the feminine principle. Therefore, the left-hand path is awakening the latent power inherent in this body. The energy manifest at mooladhara chakra is conditioned and limited, subject to the three gunas. When this energy is passive, it can be handled with relative ease, but if it becomes active, it is very difficult to control. For example, when we experience aggression or anger, the energy which is manifesting at that time is a raw, active, dynamic form of energy.

The active energy, whose expression is conditioned in our life, manifests in the form of four instincts: *maithuna*, sexuality, *bhaya*, fear, *ahara*, craving and *nidra*, sleep. Sexuality is associated with mooladhara chakra, fear and insecurity with swadhisthana chakra, craving with manipura chakra, and nidra, passivity, with anahata chakra. These four instincts are the uncontrolled, instinctive expressions of cosmic energy in our physical existence.

Managing the instincts is the purpose of the left-hand path of tantra, which is also for people deeply connected with the world, who have their attachments and responsibilities from which they cannot free themselves to pursue a more balanced spiritual path. So, to cultivate spiritual awareness, certain spiritual components must be included in their daily household routine. In the left-hand path of tantra there are five ideas or sadhanas: *matsya*, symbolized by fish, *mamsa*, by meat, *madya*, by wine, *mudra*, by grain, and *maithuna*, by sex. People believe that because tantra says fish, meat, wine, sex and grain, they can be used for spiritual upliftment; there is nothing wrong in indulging in them. However, this is a simplistic, literal interpretation. These concepts are defined and enlarged upon in the tantric texts.

Kularnava Tantra, the most authentic text on tantra, explains the symbology of these five sadhanas. It says that if by eating fish or meat, or by drinking wine, or having sex, it was possible to be enlightened, then anybody who indulges in these practices would be naturally enlightened and there would be no need for spiritual teaching. However, it must also be mentioned that tantra does not consider anything as sinful or profane because everything we are experiencing is a product of this life only. Human beings have the potential to beautify and enrich the environment and the place where they live. The idea of sin has been handed down through religious conditionings, but it is not a tantric idea.

In the left-hand path of tantra one can lead a normal family, social and sexual life and yet know that sublimation and cultivation of the qualities of consciousness and the heart is the aim of the relationship. Tantra says that to overcome negative sexuality, love, which is a heart feeling, has to be cultivated, not passion, which is mental. To sublimate the energy, the flow has to be reversed during the sexual act, so instead of being discharged and wasted, the energy is raised from mooladhara up to sahasrara through ajna and concentrated. Then the doors of spiritual realization open up. This instinct is managed at the level of mooladhara.

At the next level, swadhisthana chakra, the seat of the crescent moon and the water element, representing the mind, fear and insecurity manifest. They are the only states that can disturb the natural harmony of the mind, because the roots are deeply ingrained in our personality. Thus they have a deeper effect on the behaviour, personality and the mind compared to other negative emotions such as anxiety, aggression, etc. The major fear is being uprooted from our comfort zone, in relation to our profession, family, personal life, emotional life, social life and so on. In the left-hand path of tantra, in the second stage one has to confront and discover one's fears. Tantra has very intense sadhanas which bring you face to face with your inner fears and insecurities and you emerge a stronger, balanced person, master of your life.

The third instinct is craving, desiring. We function because of the strength we receive from our desires and aspirations, which may not necessarily be our needs. They can be managed by following a meditative path of self-observation, *swadhyaya*.

The centre of craving and desire is manipura chakra, where everything is taken in, burned and distributed. Through swadhyaya practices such as the SWAN theory and antar mouna, the behavioural and mental patterns can be understood, guided, controlled and pacified.

The fourth instinct is sleep, a passive or tranquil state of existence, without any mental or emotional upheaval. Tantra manages these four basic instincts by cultivating awareness and finding a balance in the normal routine, so we can live healthy and happy lives.



Book educated neo-tantrics take the practices too literally, whereas an enlightened tantric understands mystical tantra as it relates to our life. In tantra, consuming fish means perfection of pranayama. The two fish that have to be consumed refer to the flows of air in the nostrils. Consumption of wine means perfection of khechari mudra through which the life-giving nectar or *amrita*, the result of a hormonal secretion, is retained on the tongue instead of being burnt. Consumption of meat means perfection and purification of *annamaya kosha*, the meat body, attained through hatha yoga. Consumption of grain means being able to manage the vrittis. Maithuna indicates union of the twin forces, positive and negative, within oneself, raising the kundalini and uniting with Shiva in sahasrara. These tantric principles can be incorporated into one's family life to regulate and guide the relationships and attitudes being cultivated at home. However,

the crux of tantric philosophy is acceptance of life as it is now. This is the left-hand path of tantra.

Change, transformation and transition are the eternal laws of life. Tantra is not a practice, ritual or ceremony, but a lifestyle that one lives consciously to progress and improve the quality of life and to develop awareness of Shakti. In the yogic and tantric tradition, Shakti is called yogamaya. *Yoga* means union, *maya* means separation. Yoga represents unity, maya signifies duality. Maya is flowing away from the source. Yoga is flowing back to the source. Tantra is like the salmon swimming upstream against the current towards its birthplace. So in an unreal or ever-changing world, there is a search for reality. Being influenced by change is the realm of maya, the manifest nature. Trying to find a stable base where we can be unaffected by the changes is yoga. Therefore, Shakti always has a dual role, to take one away from the source and to bring one back to the source.

Normally we move with the current into the world without awareness. Reversal of Shakti can happen by consciously directing our efforts to experience union, to understand inner experiences. Then the flow of energy is endless. The entire tantric system and the yogic system is a process of rediscovering that unifying energy and strength. Therefore, tantra and yoga should be seen as a lifestyle where we are fine-tuning and adjusting our life to attain maximum harmony and balance. When there is a conscious effort to discover oneself, we encounter peace, happiness and tranquillity and we become that in the course of time. There is only one condition of tantra: you have to be sincere with yourself. Do not dupe yourself. There should be no holes in the mind. So first, plug your holes. You can do this with the practices of yoga, meditation, relaxation, pranayama and other sadhanas. Perfection of yoga is a prerequisite before attempting perfection in tantra. Yoga is preparing the ground and tantra is the flowering of the seed. Therefore, first we need to perfect yoga and then to understand and walk the path of tantra, otherwise there will be greater confusion and more problems. And remember to always to light the lamp of inspiration, determination, conviction and faith in your life. It is this lamp that will eventually shed light on the path. ॐ



January

The All-India Convention in Jabalpur took place from the 27th to 30th. Swami Niranjana gave satsang, lectures and initiations daily. Twelve sannyasins accompanied him and gave classes at locations around Jabalpur. Smt Krishna Devi closed each evening session with chanting from the Ramayana.

Swami Satyadharma conducted a program in Mumbai, followed by a three-day nada yoga retreat.

A yoga therapy training camp for doctors was organized at Anand Darshan Ashram, Bhagalpur, and conducted by Swami Omkarananda and Dr Jignasu Dharmavrat.

January–March

The village program inaugurated by Swami Niranjana began with a ten-day program in Sitakund conducted by Swami Satyabindu and Sannyasi Yogashikshananda, a yoga seminar in Maranchi from the 4th to 9th March and a ten-day yoga camp at Durgasthan in Patam village. Swami Niranjana gave talks on the 24th and 25th March.

Swami Sambuddhananda conducted yoga programs at Bolunda Coalfields, Talcher, at NALCO in Damanjori and Angul, and at Orissa Industries Ltd.

February

Swami Niranjana conducted a Yoga Convention at Gyandarshan Yogashram, Bhilai, MP, from the 24th to 27th.

Swami Vigyanachaitanya guided yoga practices during the Annual Physical Education Meet of the Bihar Military Police.

A five-day yoga course was conducted by Swami Hrishikeshananda from BSY at Satyam Om Yoga Vidyalaya, Bilaspur, from the 22nd to 26th.

March

The first of the programs in various jails, organized by Swami Swaroopananda and the Government of Orissa, was conducted

by the swamis of Yoga Darshan Ashram.

Swamis Satyadharma and Swayambhunath conducted a yoga seminar at Yoga Seva Samiti Satyananda Hall, Udaipur, Rajasthan, from the 7th to 16th.

A program for scientists from the All-India Atomic Group was conducted at Ganga Darshan from the 16th to 30th.

Swami Gorakhnath conducted a yoga seminar at the Gondia Yoga Mitra Mandal from the 19th to 25th.

April

Swami Niranjana conducted a convention in Patna from the 11th to 13th. For one week before and after the convention, nine swamis gave classes throughout the city to bankers, soldiers, prisoners, electricity board officials, Bihar military police, medical staff, school children and teachers. Swamiji's press conference



was attended by 50 reporters, who demonstrated great interest in his message.

Swamiji conducted a seminar in Kolkata from the 26th to 28th.

A residential yoga seminar was conducted at the DAV Jawahar Vidya Mandir by Swami Gautam from BSY.

Swami Hrishikeshananda conducted a three-day yoga course at Indira Vihar Colony, South Eastern Coalfields.

At the request of the Indian Army, Swamis Yogavijay and Vigyanchaitanya from BSY conducted yoga camps for army personnel in the desert at Bikaner from 17th to 23rd April, at Ladakh from 29th April to 3rd May and at Siachen Glacier base camp from 5th to 9th May.

Swami Satyadharma arrived in Australia to conduct seminars and classes.



May-June

Swami Niranjan travelled to Mangrove Mountain, Australia. His one-month program commenced with Poorna Sannyasa Week, emphasizing Vedanta and the tradition of sannyasa as exemplified by Swami Satyananda. Next came Karma Sannyasa Week with the emphasis on karma yoga and the Bhagavad Gita. Swamiji then conducted a Festival of Yoga for the hundreds of people who came to meet him and experience ashram life. Throughout the program various guests gave discourses, including Swamis Anandananda, Sivamurti and Prakashananda, the directors of Satyananda Yoga in Italy, Greece and Germany.

En route to India, Swamiji gave satsang at several locations in Singapore.



Swami Satyabindu conducted a yoga camp for children in Patna Maharashtra Sadan from the 4th to 13th.

Swamis Swayambhunath and Padmapad from BSY conducted a training camp at Barauni Oil Refinery from the 23rd to 29th.

In Mumbai, Swami Vibhooti gave classes at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Chaupatty, from 29th May to 2nd June and a residential retreat at Lonavala from 4th to 6th June.

June

Swamis Satyabindu and Shaktimitra from BSY conducted a yoga seminar under the mango trees of Kharia village from the 6th to 15th.

Yoga classes for children were conducted by Swami Swayambhunath at Saraswati Shishu Mandir from the 23rd to

29th. He then conducted a yoga camp with Patna Mitra Mandal at Tilak Bhavan.

July

Guru Poornima was celebrated at Ganga Darshan on the 22nd with morning havan, followed by kirtan and initiations into mantra, jignasu and karma sannyasa. In the evening Swamiji gave satsang and Smt Krishna Devi gave discourses on the Ramayana. A yoga camp, organized by Hazaribagh Yoga Mitra Mandal, was conducted by Swami Satyabindu.

Swamis from Atmadarshan Yogashram, Bangalore, held a program at the Indian Institute of Management.



August

A yoga camp was conducted at Jay Narayan Arogyadham, a Nature Cure hospital, by Swami Swayambhunath from the 10th to 17th.

Swami Niranjana conducted the Satna Yoga Convention, organized by Shiva Darshan Ashram, from the 22nd to 24th. BSY sannyasins gave lectures and camps in over 30 locations.

On the 25th Swamiji visited Chitrakoot and addressed Gayatri Shaktipeeth volunteers, university students and volunteers.

Swamiji then travelled to Mumbai at the invitation of the Satyananda Yoga Centre and conducted a program from the 27th to 31st, including an open discussion for several hours with a group of psychiatrists who were keen to evolve a psychological language for better living.

September

Swami Niranjana conducted the Akhil Bharatiya Yoga Sammelan, organized by Shanti Darshan Ashram, at Bokaro from the 4th to 6th. BSY sannyasins conducted yoga seminars locally and in 25 schools. From the 10th to 19th, yoga seminars were conducted at Rajendra Agricultural College, Samastipur, by Swamis Gyanbhikshu and Satyabindu from BSY.

Swami Vigyanachaitanya conducted a camp for marksmen from the Indian Army at Mhow Army Camp.

Dr Sannyasi Trimurti and Dr Jignasu Dharmavrat conducted a yoga camp in Jammu from the 20th to 25th.

October

A Health Management Course and a Kriya Yoga Course were conducted at Ganga Darshan.

Swami Satyabindu conducted classes at Maharashtra Bhavan for the Danapur Military Club and Military School from the 20th to 23rd.

Swami Ishwari gave classes at Dr Ranjan K. Akhouri's clinic for student nurses at Patna Medical College Hospital and to trainees of the State Bank of India.

Swami Niranjana conducted programs in Italy, England, Wales, France and the Netherlands from 2nd October to November 13th.

Swami Hrishikeshananda conducted programs at the Chinimin area of the South Eastern Coalfields from the 26th to 31st October and at Raymond Cement Works, Bilaspur, from the 6th to 11th November.



November

Swami Dharmakeerti from BSY conducted two intensive seminars at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Deonar, and at Adhyatma Prempuri Ashram, Mumbai.

A yoga program for police was conducted by swamis from the Rajnandgaon ashram at Police Line.

Swami Satyananda called all devotees to the Sri Panchdashnam Paramahansa Alakh Bara from 18th November to 17th December. Thousands were inspired by the incandescent darshan of Sri Swamiji. This was an opportunity to have darshan and satsang with the Master who was now living the life of an avadhoota. The program was imbued throughout with the spirit of bhakti as Sri Swamiji spoke on his relationship with God, and devotees were inspired to donate gifts of cows, implements, clothing, medical supplies, etc. to Sri Swamiji's neighbours for distribution by Sivananda Math.

December

About 600 devotees from around the world visited Ganga Darshan after their pilgrimage to Rikhia. There were daily satsangs, a Kriya Yoga Course was conducted from 5th to 11th and a Swara Yoga Course from 19th to 25th.



Many of the people who had attended the 1992-93 six-month sannyasa course had stayed for the Golden Jubilee Convention. Now that the convention was over, Swamiji encouraged them to return to their previous homes, as he had with the participants of the 1991 sannyasa course, even if this was not what they wanted. It meant they were to sort out their commitments and return only if free to do so. Swamiji had said that everyone should leave as soon as possible after the convention. Some devotees travelled for a while and then returned to Ganga Darshan to seek guidance, convinced that their dharma was to work with him.

How has so much success affected Swami Niranjanananda? Not at all. On Basant Panchami he resigned from the Presidency of BSY and installed Swami Gyanprakash, whom he had named Acharya of the institution in 1993, as the new President. Swamiji was thus free to attend to the needs of people as he saw fit, while Swami Gyanprakash would deal with the details and intricacies of administration and the needs of the people who came to experience life in the ashram.

The work for BSY, SM and the new projects organized by Swami Niranjan to fulfil the needs of the time were continued by the resident swamis and a new group who gathered after the convention. In India, Swamiji divided his time between residence at Ganga Darshan, tours and initiating new projects inspired by the Golden Jubilee Convention. Swami Satyabindu's report on the village work inspired by Swamiji and how his whole-hearted approach proved successful in translating the techniques of yoga into practices that the villagers could identify with and incorporate in their daily lives is revealing.

The cry for yoga is raised from village to village

"On the last day of the convention, Swami Niranjan told the assembled multitude the concern of the intelligentsia, saints and yogis. He spoke of the vision of his guru and declared, 'I will take yoga to the villages and strive to make available solutions to all physical, mental, material and spiritual problems of the rural

people, and I will take forward Gururji's sankalpa of making yoga the culture of tomorrow a reality in the world.'

Since then, geru-clad sannyasins have begun to move in the villages. A sequence of ten-day seminars has been heartily welcomed and the demand has been increasing from all corners.

In the morning from 6 to 7.30 am there is chanting, asana, pranayama and relaxation practices. From 8 to 9 am yoga therapy classes are held and people affected with asthma, blood pressure, heart problems, diabetes, arthritis, etc. are provided with treatment. From 11 am to 12.30 pm visits are made to educational institutions in the locality. The necessity for

From 4 pm all yoga practitioners assemble and mass karma yoga is performed for one hour. During this time, common grounds, roads, temples, schools and compounds of the village panchayat are cleaned and repaired. Trees and flowering plants are planted there and along the roads.

The last program begins at 7 pm with Harinaam sankirtan, and all sing and dance together with bhakti and play on drums and cymbals, which purifies the heart and relieves mental and emotional suppression. Then there is satsang where spiritual culture is taught through tales and stories which focus on the aim of human life, and doubts are cleared. Then meditation techniques



yogic education is stressed and there are question and answer sessions. Students are taught asana and pranayama for better health and mental strength.

Discussions on yoga are held in the social organizations of the district. People there are trained in yoga practices and personal interviews are given to help with specific problems.

such as ajapa japa and antar mouna are taught; collective chanting of Aum, Gayatri and Mahamrityunjaya mantra are also stressed. The session closes with aarti and shanti path.

In this way sannyasins become partners with the villagers in their problems, worries and happiness. The result is inspirational. We especially noticed that if on the first day one hundred people

come, on the second day the numbers increase and this continues every day until on the last day there are often 800 or 900 people.

Yoga is proving to be a strong technique for uplifting the total lifestyle of the villages. Asana and pranayama improve health, tranquillity and mental alertness, while pratyahara, relaxation and meditation techniques help raise spiritual consciousness. Not merely this, but the yamas and niyamas help to foster truth, non-violence and other qualities which enable people to live together more harmoniously. The karma yoga gives immediate

devotees spared no efforts to arrange the whole program with utmost care. The speeches given by Swami Niranjana inspired the creation of a new book, *On the Banks of the Narmada*.

In April, Patna opened its doors to Swamiji through a yoga convention. During the course of an amazingly enthusiastic reception, classes were conducted for prisoners in Central Jail, for medical staff in Patna Medical College, for bankers of the Central Bank, for the Bihar Military Police, for officers of the Bihar Electricity Board and for the Army.

community except them, and demanded a special course for media personnel at Ganga Darshan.

The Patna convention was so successful that the Minister for Jails decided to incorporate yoga in the daily program of prisoners to help them deal with the stress of confinement and to enable them to change their personalities constructively so as to become harmonious members of society when their term is completed. He also held out to prisoners the chance of serving shortened sentences if their behaviour demonstrated that yoga practices had increased self-discipline.



material benefits and helps the practitioner to act in a detached manner, in the spirit of service, giving up the results of the action to God."

The year started with the convention in Jabalpur. A grand success. Thousands of people listened to Swami Niranjana and the spiritual and medical authorities who accompanied him. After the drenching of their pandal the previous year, the

During the Patna convention, Swamiji gave talks on pratyahara, dharana and dhyana in three morning sessions, and gave satsang each evening. Each day he also gave two or three satsangs in venues where classes had been given during the previous week. These talks now form the volume *On the Banks of the Ganga*. These teachings proved so successful that press reporters joked that he had helped all sections of the



Swami Swayambhunath has spearheaded the work among prisoners, so we will ask for his report in this critical social area.

Yoga in prisons

"In April 1994, upon the request of the Bihar Government, prisoners of Patna Bankipur Central Jail and Bhagalpur Jail were taught yogic practices. The prisoners found the techniques brought an overwhelming sense of relief and were genuinely

surprised by the beneficial effects of the techniques. The main motive behind these courses was to expand the consciousness and thus bring about positive change, balance and harmony in the mentality of the prisoners – and success was achieved.

We observed, during these programs, that even prisoners with a criminal mentality showed interest and there was a noticeable change in both their thoughts and vision. The work in this area is continuing and Swami Niranjan is holding trained sannyasins and yoga teachers ready to expand the program.

were given further training and the status of yoga teacher, helping other inmates of the jails with their practices.

Later, with the yogic practices, several reforms were noticed in the lifestyle within the confines of the jail. Traits of violence, anger and mental imbalance were reduced. Interpersonal relations among prisoners, and their relationship with the prison authorities improved.

In fact, Sri Swamiji and Swami Niranjan organized many yoga camps in prisons during their foreign tours. In one of the prisons

After the World Yoga Convention, the Health Department of the Government of Bihar realized the great potential of yoga in the arena of health management. In December 1993 the Department of Health sent a request to BSY to collaborate with them in organizing 'Yoga Orientation Programs for Doctors', starting with the staff members of the nine medical colleges of Bihar, and then including all the district hospitals and other health service employees.

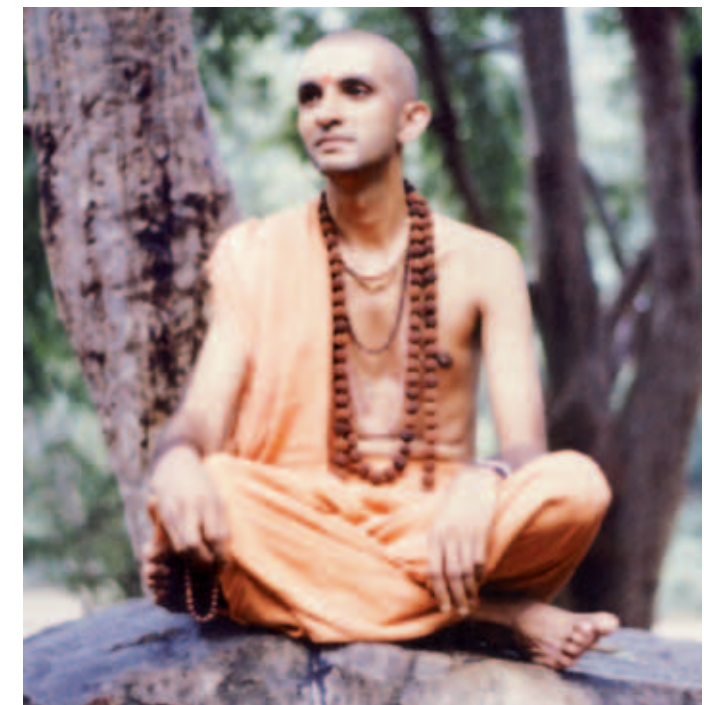
The need for orientation programs was felt because despite a large scale dissemination of information on the beneficial effects



In earlier years, in 1976, with the approval of the Maharashtra Government, Dr S.K. Vyavhare, Chairman of the Ghantali Mitra Mandal, taught prisoners of Thane prison some yogic practices. Observing the benefits derived from this camp a yoga training course was organized for prisoners. On the completion of this course, all the students had to appear for a written, oral and practical exam. The prisoners were rated between 42 and 87%. Those who did best

of the US, Sri Swamiji was invited for a one-day program and the authorities were so pleased that they asked him to conduct another one for one week and noticed an unexpected improvement."

The Minister for Medical Education and Family Welfare likewise pledged to introduce yoga into the syllabus of all the nine medical colleges in Bihar so that all doctors would eventually be qualified to use yoga therapy as part of their practice.



of yoga and yogic practices, many health practitioners are still sceptical or unconvinced of the claims made on behalf of yoga. The major cause of their scepticism is lack of scientific understanding of psychological mechanisms underlying yogic practices, and of how they restore health on all levels – physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. It is this holistic health which yoga aims to provide, and most modern doctors do not know about it.

Moreover, on account of the rising cost of medicines and therapeutic procedures, the failing efficiency of antibiotics and the inadequate control of psychosomatic problems which constitute the bulk of today's health problems, it becomes imperative to search for an alternative. It is obviously more logical to prevent the disease rather than cure it. All these aspects, namely of holistic health, low cost, preventative nature and very effective control of psychosomatic problems, etc. are great advantages of yoga therapy, to name only a few. Thus yoga emerges as a powerful adjunct to modern medicine which doctors of today need to be informed about.

The first program was held in Bhagalpur Medical College. It was inaugurated by Swami Niranjan and the inaugural ceremony was attended by the Health Minister of Bihar, the Additional Health Secretary, other IAS officers and senior doctors. A seven-

day course was organized which was attended by about 50 consultants, lecturers, readers, professors, heads of departments and the Dean. Practical classes on basic asana and pranayama, yoga nidra and other yogic techniques were given, in addition to regular theoretical discussions on technical aspects of yogic therapy. There were very lively question and answer sessions. After the course the feedback response was that there was a great and widespread appreciation of yogic principles.

The doctors present strongly recommended compulsory training in yoga for all medical students, and that yoga should become a subject in the teaching curriculum of medical education in order to make the practice of modern medicine more complete and holistic in the future. Most of the doctors realized the hidden potentials of yogic practices and have become dedicated and regular practitioners themselves.

The second camp was conducted in Patna Medical College. There also a similar response was noted. The course was attended by over 100 doctors and students, many of the doctors being very enthusiastic about carrying out research on yoga and integrating yoga with their professional practice and personal lifestyle as well. They also highly recommended yoga to be made a part of medical education. The additional thing that happened here was that the nursing staff also participated in classes which were run simultaneously. The nurses also wanted yoga to be an integral part of the nursing profession in order to improve the quality of their service to suffering people.

Work also started on introducing the techniques of yoga into the Indian army. Swamis Yogavijay and Vigyanchaitanya travelled to several army base camps such as at the Siachen Glacier and the desert of Bikaner and conducted the training. Swami Vigyanchaitanya recalls the experience.





Yoga joins the Indian Army

"One of the distinguished visitors at the World Yoga Convention held in 1993 was General B.C. Joshi, the Chief of Staff of the Indian Army. He was keen to introduce this ancient science in the Indian army."

He felt that yoga could best be utilized in the middle of action – in the forward bases where the environmental conditions are extremely harsh and unfriendly to humans. He asked Swami Niranjan if this plan was feasible. Swamiji said, 'Yes, of course.' An immediate plan of action was drawn up. It was decided that a few sannyasins from BSY, accompanied by an Indian Army team, would first visit a desert location and impart yoga techniques suitable for combating the heat and meeting other site requirements. The team would then move on to a glacier location and impart practices for combating the extreme cold.

As a first step, 12 young soldiers from the Army Physical Training Centre (APTC) came to Munger to get grounding on the basics of yoga. They lived in the ashram for twelve days and experienced

different practices of yoga. Soldiers take to yoga like duck to water. The inherent discipline in the army way of life makes them absorb the yogic discipline very easily. Once trained, the army yoga team went back and then the formalities were worked out for the sannyasi team's visit to the forward bases.

A program was drawn up and two sannyasis left for Delhi in April 1994. The first destination was Bikaner, in the middle of the expansive Rajasthan deserts. This was the headquarters of the 24th Infantry Regiment. A seven-day program for soldiers was conducted there. The practices taught were totally needs-based with specific programs to tackle the heat and to reduce fatigue while working for long hours in tanks, artillery guns and MBTs.

Thereafter the team left for Siachen Glacier, an army base located in one of the most inhospitable regions on earth. The base had to be reached from Leh, capital of Ladakh district in Kashmir. Leh is located at a height of 12,500 feet, among stark snow covered mountains bereft of any green cover. Leh is also known as the cold



desert because of this. The air is very rarefied and it is mandatory for all newcomers to acclimatize for three days. It was decided to utilize this time for a short camp of five days for the soldiers and officers of the 3rd Infantry Regiment. The participants were taught practices to combat breathlessness, low appetite, fatigue and other problems related to extreme cold conditions. The program was conducted at the military hospital complex of the unit.

The whole program was quite an experience for the yoga team – they were being tested for endurance! From the desert heat to the bone-chilling cold and rarefied atmosphere of the frozen desert, but they were in high spirits throughout.

From Leh, a 100 kilometre journey along the world's highest road takes one to Siachen Glacier. The road goes through Khardung La, a pass located at 18,300 feet. There is a local saying that without the grace of Lord Shiva one cannot cross the pass. All the team members felt the true import of that saying particularly after going through a few hair-raising experiences!



The team reached Siachen after a very eventful ride. The two sannyasis were the first two civilians ever allowed entry into this high-security zone of the Army. The base camp, located at 11,000 feet, is the starting point of the 100-kilometre long Siachen Glacier. The army has a number of posts on the glacier at different heights up to 24,000 feet, and the base camp is the centre for these posts. Temperatures remain about minus 40 degrees Celsius the year round. Mere survival is a battle. The rarefied air and the harsh environment produce listlessness, loss of appetite, insomnia, etc. The six-day yoga camp conducted here addressed these problems and imparted a set of practices designed for these specific conditions. The course was also attended by officers. The participants were very keen as for them survival was at stake.

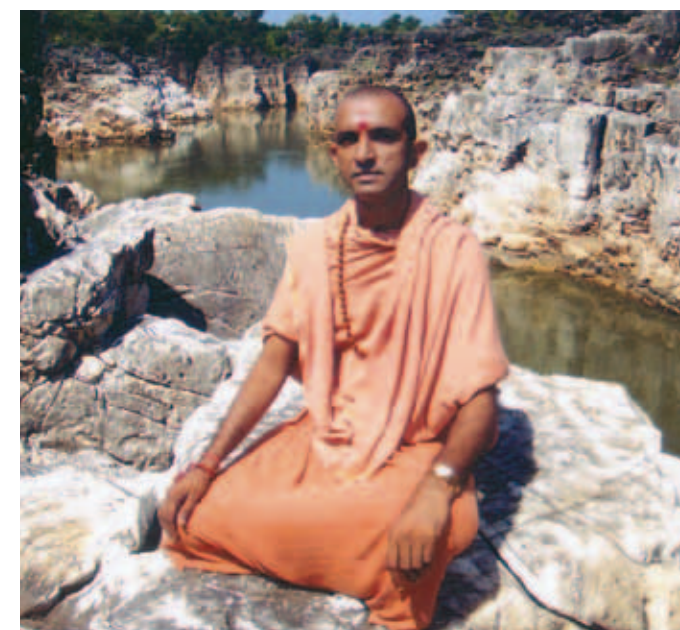
The sannyasis came back to Munger after spending nearly a month with the Indian army. The army yoga team then carried on the good work and taught yoga at different forward locations. In our experience, the army soldiers are the most positive group among yoga learners. This is firstly because of their tradition of discipline, so they are able to grasp the practices, and secondly, their hard lifestyle needs the healing touch of yoga. The army is a life of stress and yoga gives the chance to relax and unwind; body stiffness and fatigue developed because of high physical stress is also relieved.

Yoga has been very well received by the army and this is in line with the ancient Indian tradition. Lord Krishna imparted the

science of yoga to Arjuna in the middle of the battlefield, and we are simply remaining in line with that tradition.”

Swami Niranjana's Australian and European tours had been eagerly anticipated for several years. Satyananda Ashram Mangrove Mountain was re-established as 'the heart of yoga and sannyasa lifestyle' in Australia. Different seminars catered to the needs of the people invited. Many people had been initiated into poorna sannyasa by Sri Swamiji. The first week of May was devoted to them and Swamiji gave new and deeper insights into the traditions of sannyasa and its background of yoga, Vedanta and Samkhya in a series of lectures. The difficulties of incorporating the high ideals of sannyasa life in the western culture were confronted. Swamiji organized a havan ceremony which all present recognized as the symbol of a new beginning.

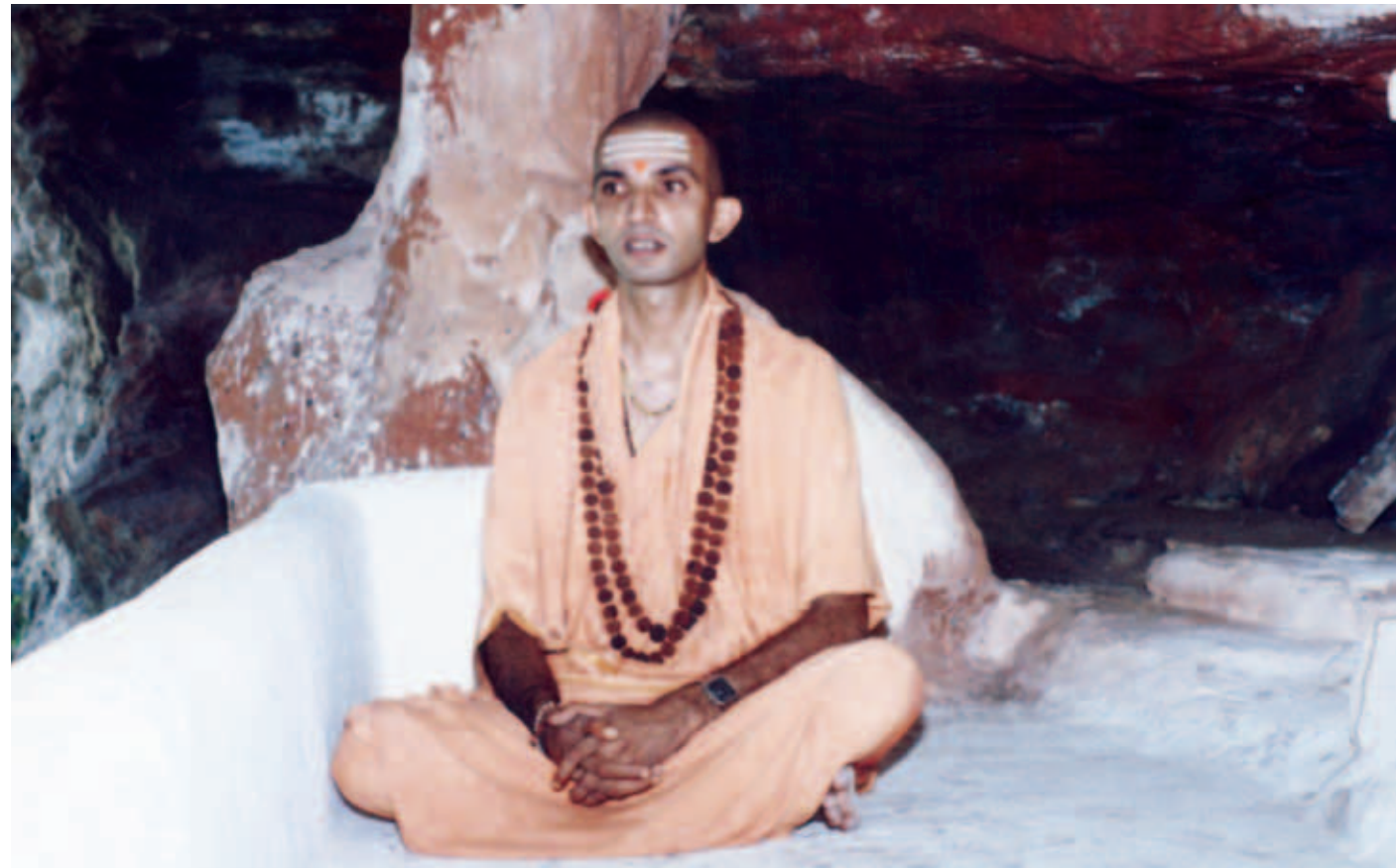
The second week was devoted to the karma sannyasins. Swamiji's lectures included an inspired series on the Bhagavad Gita, karma yoga and service. Plans were discussed for a community of karma sannyasins and the week ended on a joyful



note, which exploded into a Festival of Yoga and a Meditation Weekend. Hundreds of people came to meet Swamiji and there were talks given by the directors of European ashrams as well as by leaders of Australian yoga centres.

Later in the year, the European tour continued to spread a deeper understanding of yoga and sannyasa around the globe. Swamiji had not visited Europe since 1979 and he recognized a great change in the people coming to him for guidance. Many had started yoga looking for physical health and mental peace. Now, he saw that their achievement of these goals had led to a greater aspiration for understanding of the deeper aspects of their own personality.

On 4th October, he gave a public lecture on 'Yoga: The Integration of Body, Mind and Spirit' at the Teatro Colosseo, Torino, to more than 2,000 participants. A three-day seminar at the Hotel Punta Nord, Rimini had participants from Italy, Germany and Slovenia. At Montescudo Ashram he gave initiations, satsang and performed havan. In Florence the program was arranged by Swamis Uttarkashi and Anusandhana.



In Wales, his host was Swami Nishchalananda, and Swami Niranjan conducted a laya yoga seminar for yoga teachers, gave initiations, and conducted a forum which discussed the role of sannyasa in the West, the Yoga Charter and network communication set up for Europe.

On the 18th, Swamiji arrived in London and conducted programs organized by Swami Pragyamurti, including a seminar on laya yoga, a special satsang for those who had contacted the HIV virus and a program at the Hindu-Caribbean Society on 'Yogic Ways of Awakening One's Dormant Potential'.

On the 24th, Swamiji arrived in Brittany, gave another seminar on laya yoga for yoga teachers and initiations, then travelled to the

Yoga Darshan Centre in Six-Fours for a program organized by Swami Vivekmani where he spoke on 'Yoga, the Heritage of Today and the Culture of Tomorrow'. At the Centre de Yoga Satyananda, directed by Swami Atmaja, he gave satsang, initiation and led the chanting and meditation practice. On the 31st, Swamiji inaugurated the new ashram in Aube. On November 3rd Swamiji lectured on the subject of 'Karma and Destiny' at the Sorbonne University, Paris, to an audience of over 1,200 students, visitors, professors and scholars.

In the Netherlands, the program was organized by Sannyasis Savitananda and Suryamitra, and included a Yoga Congress at Maharishi International Centre at Laag Soeren from November 4th to 6th.

In Europe he gave insight into the practices of pratyahara, dharana and dhyana and opened new areas in the management and harmonization of the internal and external impressions of the psyche, emphasizing the need to integrate these insights into daily life. For those who had received Teacher Training Courses in Wales, England and France, Swamiji also gave initiation into laya yoga; harmonizing the self on deeper emotional levels after dealing with mental states.

‘Yoga and Concentration: Theory and Practice’ and ‘Taking Time for the Essentials’. In the final session a discussion took place between Swamiji and leading scientists and educationalists on a ‘Declaration of the Right of an Individual to Education’.

Swami Niranjan, when he laid aside the Presidency of BSY in order to move into the new vistas of the mission opening around him, did so gently, reassuring us of continued guidance in our spiritual journey. Simultaneously, he made it clear that he expects

“P hew! What an incredible chain of accomplishments,” bubbled my eager listener as we walked the cobblestone path along the perimeter of the ashram admiring the roses in bloom parallel to the akhara, peacocks dancing in the special enclosures prepared for them, and twittering birds settling down for the night among the mango, lichi, jamun, bael, jackfruit, guava, neem, coconut, ashoka, teak, gulmohar . . . oh innumerable trees. As evening descended upon the ashram,



Swamiji was the Guest Speaker at an International Conference organized by UNESCO on RYE techniques in Education titled ‘Invent Tomorrow’s Education’ which began in Sevres, Paris. The RYE method of integrating yoga into education has been developed by Swami Yogabhakti (Micheline Flak) over many years under the inspiration of Sri Swamiji. This integration was able to prove successful in many classroom situations and generate a new approach to education in Europe. Swamiji’s topics during the three-day program included ‘The Inner Force’,

total commitment from those who accompany him. In whatever walk of life we find ourselves, we should travel with the spirit of service to humanity, to society, to the harmony of nature itself. In fact, he himself embodies the spirit of selfless service.

1994 saw the ripening of many initiatives to integrate yoga into the world culture and now Swamiji was able to focus on a new seed, again fulfilling a vision that Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda cherished. This was the establishment of a Yoga University.



we found ourselves becoming quieter. We passed by Kutir, and spotted the familiar, tall silhouette. And as it happens every time you see Swamiji, an instant reaching into the best of our natures took place spontaneously. The glow on my companion’s face confirmed the phenomenon.

“He was certainly born for a mission, wasn’t he,” she observed. “I would say so, and some people saw that a long time back. Swami Sivamaya, for instance.”

A blessing in my journey

"I met Swami Satyananda in 1971 and was profoundly impressed by his wisdom. He was the one person who truly recognized my deepest needs and would show me how to meet them. He was the master I needed. I began learning and following his teachings by participating in the activities at the yoga school that we created after his visit, the Satyananda Ashram in Bogota.

mood ready to teach and learn. Soon he became part of the family. My children played with him and he behaved just like them: playful, tricky and mischievous. He loved to read comics, and learned to drive by occasionally sneaking off in the cars of those of us who were in class. Nevertheless, and despite being only 12 years old, he fulfilled all his responsibilities, always ready for whatever program needed to be organized. The program I enjoyed the most with him

I truly enjoyed his company. As I took him back and forth and accompanied him on his programs, I would discuss with him how to organize them and helped assist in his agenda in Colombia as well as other South American countries where he was invited. In 1975 we celebrated the International Yoga Convention and he became very interested in the Pre-Colombian culture. He travelled to San Augustin, drew many mandalas from this culture, studied them, and prepared a presentation



In 1972 we were told that Sri Swamiji's successor would be coming to Colombia. We had great expectations and were thrilled to greet him at the airport. I still hold in my memory the image of the boy descending from the plane; he wore a little camel coloured coat, a backpack on his back and a curious, but shy gaze which hinted at his desire to discover everything.

The day after his arrival he was transformed into a total swami – head totally shaved, dressed in geru dhotis and his

was kirtan, as listening to him sing was delightful. He also gave yoga classes at the Bogota ashram, and at schools and religious communities. He taught young athletes and groups of children, all of whom adored him because he instilled them with enthusiasm by always having a game or something fun to do. Most of these children, including my own kids, always remembered him with love and the feeling that he left an indelible mark on their lives, setting an example that they would try to follow.



about the similarities he found between the Pre-Colombian and vedic cultures.

I saw him become immersed in his job, helped along by artists his age and youth who enjoyed working with him. For him work was like a party. It was fun, a game, and he was able to maintain this kind of atmosphere without compromising the seriousness of the work or the fulfilment of his daily duty. This is something I learned by observing him – that even the most difficult work and



life itself is like a game, but you need to know, understand and follow the rules of the game. In 1976, when he left Colombia it was a very difficult moment because we had to see off someone with whom we had shared everything, whose presence brought us nothing but love, understanding and satisfaction.

In 1980 when he arrived in Chicago, I expected to find the young, 20-year-old man whom I had witnessed grow as a multitalented child, joyful and confident, and who was preparing to become the successor of his master. I imagined we still had to wait for a long time for that moment, but he gave a speech at a conference to which I listened with awe and astonishment. The movement of his hands and many of his gestures reminded me of Sri Swamiji, and he expressed himself with wisdom and profound knowledge. Attuned to the needs of his audience, he transmitted his teachings in a language that everyone

understood. At this point, I had no doubt: he represented Sri Swamiji, he was his successor, he was also my master.

I travelled with him to different US cities. Everywhere his teachings fulfilled all expectations because he showed a path and the way to walk it. He showed the path we all want to walk but don't know how.

In 1983, when he went back to India I did not see him again for many years, but even across the distance he was my strength and I always found his support in the most difficult moments: when one of my children died, when my husband died and I was in bankruptcy, and when I had to take on jobs and roles that seemed impossible but were obligatory because I had to look after my children's well-being and education. One of his letters, a phrase or a poem that I would find among his writings would

give me the courage and security to know that, despite the storm, the sun would eventually shine again.

One of my greatest life satisfactions is having been able to be with him in multiple scenarios: in meetings with presidents, ministers and top executives, with professionals, with religious people, with humble and working people, with adolescents and seniors. He has the knowledge, the behaviour and the skills of the most refined of presidents and most efficient of executives. But when he is with children or with simple and humble people, he is like them. He treats them with the greatest of love, he knows how to understand their situation and needs, he reaches their heart. He is a king among kings, a child among children, and simple, considerate and open when he is with humble and working people.



When I had to assume special responsibilities and duties I just had to remember him and I felt safe to act. I had learned by his side that one must have the discrimination and the capacity to assume behaviour appropriate to one's surroundings.

When I retired from my job I decided to move to Munger so that I could help with administrative work. I felt that my experience and my knowledge in this field would be very valuable. But after some time I realized that in reality what I needed was to learn. Swamiji would allow me to implement some of my own ideas, which later I would have to repair and amend. His financial savvy, ability to plan activities, and his knowledge of the staff and their needs was extraordinary, proving in the end to be far superior to my experience and knowledge in these matters.



I have never heard him express anything negative about anyone, not even people who might wish him ill. And if someone comes with a complaint he always finds the positive aspect that makes that person reflect and change their negative attitude or the resentment for a more positive and creative state of mind. Something that has always touched my heart is his tenderness and ability to understand, which doesn't mean that he is incapable of being firm and strict when need be. I have seen him be very tough and put his foot down when necessary, but without anger, resentment or scorn for the person or people he wishes to rectify or instruct.

His generosity has no limits and there is nothing more comforting than his smile and his kind gaze. Yet when he wants to demonstrate an appropriate behaviour, he can be serious

and staid, demanding one's respect and attention, all with the intention of instructing one to behave dutifully, and for which, in the end, one is rewarded with the warmest and most compassionate smile.

To see him with Sri Swamiji awakens one's devotion and selflessness. During a ceremony or ritual, his sincere, focused and meditative expression invite contemplation and devotion, helping to transport one to a higher realm. I feel exalted and filled with pride when he sweetly and caringly refers to me as 'mamita', treating me with the tenderness, affection and care of the best of sons. Nevertheless, I can only see him as my teacher, as the one who has helped me grow, has helped me rise when I have fallen and has given me support when I most needed it."

Dharana Darshan

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

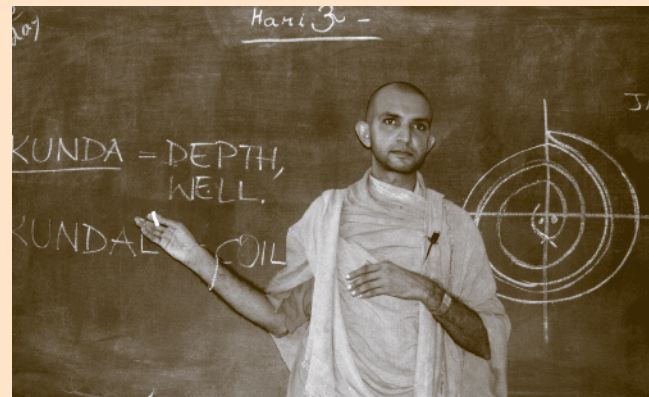
The subject of dharana as it has been described in the yogic, tantric and upanishadic traditions is the theme of this talk. There are many practices of dharana which represent an advanced level of teaching which up to now have never been elucidated for the general public. They are being given at this time because a need has been expressed by many serious and advanced practitioners for more guidance into the deeper dimensions of meditation. Systematic study and practice of these techniques will help the practitioner to bridge the gap between the preliminary techniques which are being taught today by most schools, and the advanced methods or spontaneous techniques which have traditionally never been taught except through direct transmission from guru to disciple.

Dharana means to hold or bind the mind at one point. It follows the state of pratyahara in which the normal process of the mind following the senses is reversed, so that by internalizing the awareness, the senses ultimately follow the mind. The perfection of *dharana*, concentration, leads to *dhyana*, meditation.

A concentrated mind is a powerful mind. In order to develop mental power you must first develop a concentrated mind. A dissipated mind cannot wield mental power. If the thoughts are scattered, they can be brought into concentrated focus by specific concentration practices. Then your mind will become so powerful that you would be able to influence the minds of others. You would be able to influence your character, your health, your whole life. No matter what disorder you have, whether physical or mental, it is possible to remove it by willpower alone. However, the yogic concept of dharana is not just fixing the mind on something. It is a very complex process in which the mind is taken right through the different states of external, internal and intermediate experiences.

Dharana is working with the subtle mind, not the manifest mind, which has already been dealt with in pratyahara. The subtle mind is the storehouse of everything that is transcendental and divine, subtle and gross. The aim of dharana is to awaken the energies within the psychic personality.

When there is sensorial disconnection of the mind, anything that manifests internally in dharana becomes more intense and powerful. Right now, with the externalized mind we are conscious and aware of how our body has to react and behave. In the external state there is also unconscious control of prana, whereas in meditation there is no control over prana.



The mind is cut off from the body and the pranas become free. The mental concepts become free from the conditioning of body, environment and even local mentality. The important point is to keep the mind fixed on one point of concentration, such as a mantra, symbol, thought, idea or any form. Intensity of concentration is generally regarded as dharana.

At the time of meditation, if there is oscillation in the mind, concentration will not be experienced. Dharana is a state in which there is total one-pointedness. It may come only for a second after a lot of practice. If you are trying to practise meditation with an oscillating mind, which is moving from one point to the next, while different thoughts and ideas

are coming and going, then it is not meditation or dharana, or even pratyahara. Just closing the eyes and trying to fix the mind on an image is not enough. Proper training has to be given to the senses, to the mind and also to the mental faculties as and when they manifest, in order to perfect dharana and to come to the meditative state of dhyana.

The yogic tradition describes three levels of dharana: external, intermediate and internal. *Bahir lakshya* is an external aim which one should focus upon to achieve the state of concentration. The *bahir lakshya* techniques aim at awakening the different nadis. In practices such as *bhoochari mudra* and *akashi mudra*, where the eyes are focused on the point of space, it becomes easier to control the sensorial inputs and prevent them from distracting the mental attention. So, in the external aspect of dharana, an effort is made to internalize the mind, to fix the mind on one point, to intensify the state of concentration and also to awaken the two nadis, *ida* and *pingala*.

Madhya lakshya is the intermediate stage of dharana, where an effort is made to focus the mind on the experience of space. In yoga, three regions of space are generally described, which are within the physical body. *Chidakasha* is the space of chitta or consciousness, experienced in the head region, between *vishuddhi*, *ajna* and *sahasrara* chakras. *Hridayakasha* is the space of the heart, experienced in the chest region, between *manipura*, *anahata* and *vishuddhi* chakras. *Daharakasha* is the space of the lower regions, encompassing *mooladhara*, *swadhisthana* and *manipura* chakras. *Chidakasha* dharana, *hridayakasha* dharana and *daharakasha* dharana are the dharana techniques related to these three spaces, which are seen and experienced physically within the body.

Once one is established in the subtle awareness given by *daharakasha*, which gives insight into the way one's inner experience is influenced by the *mahabhootas* and their interaction with the senses, instincts, emotional and mental states, one comes to *vyoma panchaka*, the five subtle spaces. For aspirants who need to build up the experience in stages, the practice becomes part of the effort to perfect dharana.

Daharakasha, hridayakasha and chidakasha, the three gross spaces, are experienced in the conscious and subconscious, but the experience of the five subtle mental spaces is in the realm of the unconscious and superconscious. For the yogi who has developed the *drashta*, or witnessing consciousness, the unconscious does not refer to absence of awareness, but rather to the absence of vrittis. The vyoma panchaka lead the practitioner through previously veiled realms of experience, through the unconscious and beyond.

These five spaces consist of: *guna rahita akasha*, the attributeless space, *param akasha*, the supreme space, *maha akasha*, the great space, *tattwa akasha*, the elemental space and *surya akasha*, the luminous space. We build awareness of these five subtle spaces in the intermediate stage of lakshya dharana. As the consciousness becomes stabilized in subtler perceptions, the practice takes on a new dimension, becoming part of laya yoga, where individual consciousness dissolves in the knowledge of the absolute.

The third stage of dharana is internal, *antar lakshya*. This stage can be considered as the preliminary state of dhyana because in this state the awareness and concentration of mind have passed beyond the experiences which arise out of the conscious and subconscious perceptions. One has acknowledged them and entered into another level of dharana where the psychic awareness becomes active.

Initially it was the mental awareness, knowledge and perceptions which became active while recognizing the visions arising in chidakasha. Experiencing the feelings and merging the mind with the feelings arising from hridayakasha, and recognizing the psychic structure of personality in daharakasha are also activities attributed to mental awareness. Up to this point, going into the deeper aspects of the three akasha experiences and the final akasha experiences, the vyoma panchaka, the awareness was always in a state of alertness.

There is a lot of emphasis in dharana on observation, which is gradually made subtle. When the mind is removed from a state of 'at tension', then psychic awareness, which is more natural and spontaneous, dawns. Being aware of focusing the mind on our psychic experiences is the last stage of dharana and the first stage of dhyana. Within this stage there are three levels. The first is *darshan* or visualization of sushumna, the second is awareness of *nada* or inner sound, and the third is vision of the blue light.

Antar lakshya dharana begins with awareness or vision of sushumna nadi. In intermediate dharana, we develop awareness of ida and pingala and the experience of blue and



gold light. Beyond that, however, is the realm of sushumna. Although sushumna is generally considered to be one single psychic nadi, it actually comprises of three nadis, vajra nadi, chitra nadi and brahma nadi. *Brahma nadi* is the passage through which kundalini travels from mooladhara to sahasrara. Intensifying the awareness of brahma nadi and observing it in the form of a luminous thread in the middle of sushumna is the first stage of antar lakshya dharana. Here the process of seeing is not imagination, it is darshan.

Another indication is a hissing sound heard by the ears at the time of deep dharana. This happens when the kundalini experience reaches the level of ajna chakra, for it is here that the nadas, the sound vibrations, are heard.

The final indication is seeing the blue light at ajna chakra and at anahata chakra. This blue light which appears in the psychic experience or the kundalini experience represents the fulfilment of the akasha experience. This is the completion of antar lakshya dharana, which is subtle psychic concentration, holding the mind to an inner experience and having darshan of it, not just imagining it.

Concentration is the first step of dharana, the beginning of the process of focusing in the deepest realms of the personality. Dharana is also defined as the ability to hold a state, *avastha*, without fluctuation and dissipation of awareness. We become aware of the movement of *iccha*, desire, *kriya*, action, and *sankalpa*, will, the three natures, or *swabhava*, which come into play at the most transcendental state of existence and at the most mundane state of existence. According to the tantras and yoga, the practices of dharana aim at harmonization of iccha, kriya and sankalpa at the deepest levels of our existence. In this context, dharana is the final state in which we work with our manifest nature. In dhyana, the state of complete union, *sayujyata*, there is nothing to discover. So the discovery of the nature, or swabhava, release of samskaras and gunas, and gaining the ability to go into the deepest levels of the manifest personality is the aim of dharana.

Dharana can never be complete without faith in a higher reality. Faith awakens the state of dharana in you. Ishwara pranidhana, pratyahara and dharana are in some ways synonymous. The effort in Ishwara pranidhana indicates that you become aware of your association with the higher reality, which creates an urge to dwell in that by overcoming the *vikalpas*, unfounded concepts, of the body, senses and mind. Focus and awareness are the outcome of Ishwara pranidhana. It creates a condition within the self in which there is optimism, confidence, security and the knowledge that there is an aim you are walking towards. It is like seeing the light at the end of the tunnel, which guides you, which you fix your vision on and move towards. ॐ



January

Swami Niranjan inaugurated an All India Convention organized by Satyananda Ashram, Rajnandgaon, from the 12th to 15th. BSY sannyasins gave classes for a week in the town, schools and colleges.

The Shankaracharya of Sringeri Sharada Peetham, HH Bharati Teerth Mahaswami, blessed the convention. The Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Sri Digvijay Singh, the chief guest, Sri D.S. Gill (IPS) and the chairperson, Sri Ranjool Singh participated in the proceedings. Smt Krishna Devi gave a discourse on the Ramayana. Swami Niranjan gave satsangs.

A mantra and meditation course was conducted at Ganga Darshan from the 17th to 23rd by Swami Savitananda from BSY.

Swami Vibhooti from BSY conducted an advanced yoga course at Ganga Darshan, a program at Krishnapuri Ashram and a retreat in the Matheran hills.

Swami Yogaratna from BSY conducted a children's course at Valley School, Bangalore.

February

A Teachers' Training Course was conducted in Munger from the 2nd to 26th by Swami Sumitrananda.

During Basant Panchami on the 3rd and 4th and Sivaratri on the 27th, Swami Niranjan gave initiations. Sri Rajesh Ramayani gave discourses on Ramayana.

A yoga camp arranged by the Deoghar branch of the Marwari Youth Manch was conducted by Swami Swayambhunath from the 6th to 15th.

Stress management programs were conducted by Swami Yogakanti and Dr Sannyasi Mangalteertham from BSY at the Indian Oil Management Academy, Haldia, WB, by Swami Hrishikeshananda at the NTPC Training Centre, Korba, MP, and by Swami Gautam for the Indian Oil Company (IOC) at Mourigram.

A yoga training camp was conducted at Arya Samaj Balidan Bhavan, Jammu, from the 16th to 24th by Swamis Shivaraj and Dharmavrat and Sannyasi Srimukhananda from BSY.

A course for novices and postulants from Notre Dame, Jamalpur, was conducted from February 20th to 25th by Swami Krishnapriya from BSY.

Swamis Shankarananda and Yogavijay and Dr Sannyasi Mangalteertham represented BYB at Utkal University, and conducted a program for NALCO.

Swami Satyadharma conducted classes in Australia and New Zealand.

March

Two Yoga Instructors' Certificate Courses were conducted from March 1st to 30th, one at Sivananda Ashram, Munger, by Swamis



Vibhooti and Satyabindu in Hindi, the other at Ganga Darshan by Swami Savitananda in English.

En route to Australia, Swami Niranjan conducted a convention in Kolkata from the 25th to 27th. Swamis Swayambhunath, Yogakanti, Krishnapriya, Gautam and Karmapremananda with Dr Sannyasi Mangalteertham, Sannyasi Mantrachaitanya and Vikas Kumar conducted classes.

On the 25th, Swami Niranjan spoke at the Rotary Club, then gave a press interview. In the evening he gave a public lecture at the CIT pavilion. On the 26th, Swamiji, Dr Sannyasis Gopalananda, Mangalteertham and Dharmavrat gave lectures to doctors and medical staff at Kothari Medical Centre. Swamiji then delivered a lecture at the Bharatiya Sanskriti Sadan, concluding with a meditation. On the 27th, Swamiji spoke at the Ladies Study Group and in the evening gave a public lecture.

A yoga camp was conducted by Swami Vigyanchaitanya at the headquarters of the 33rd Corps of the Indian Army at Sukna, Siliguri, West Bengal, from 20th to 30th March. It was the sixth camp in the series being conducted by BSY for the Indian Army.

April

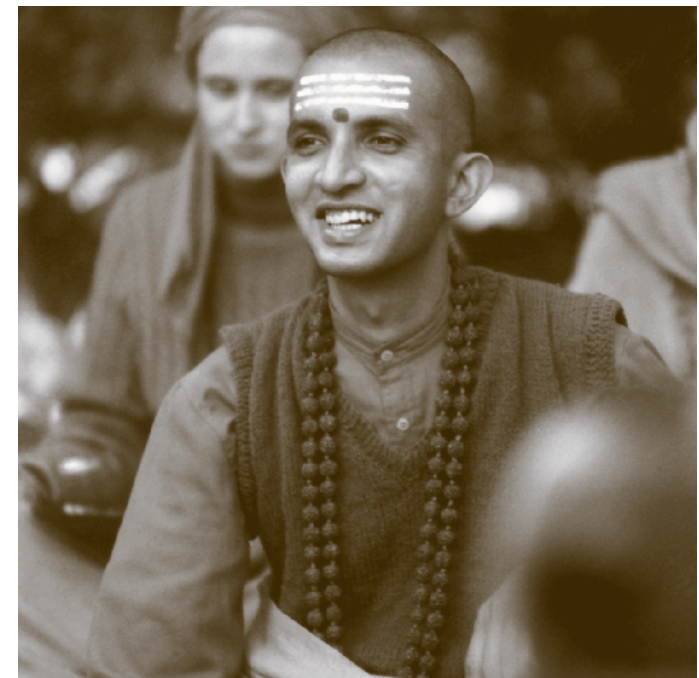
Swami Niranjan toured Australia for one month. On the 1st he gave a public lecture at Forestville Memorial Hall, Sydney. On the 4th, he inaugurated the Holistic Yoga Therapy Centre in Gosford, organized by Satyananda Ashram, and on the 5th, the Sydney Yoga Therapy Research and Education Centre, organized by Dr Swami Shankardevananda. Swamiji then travelled to Victoria, where he conducted a 'Gathering of Yoga' at Satyananda Ashram, Rocklyn, from the 7th to 11th. On the 11th, Swamiji gave a public lecture at the Camberwell Civic Centre, Melbourne. On the 20th Swamiji travelled north to the Gold Coast. He also inaugurated the new Yoga Darshan Ashram at Uki, northern NSW. From the 22nd to 26th, Swamiji conducted a Pratyahara and Meditation Week at Mangrove Mountain. An Open Day was held on the 29th. Swamiji concluded by giving each swami a positive sankalpa or resolve for the future.

A Health Management Course was conducted at Sivananda Ashram, Munger, from the 5th to 20th by Swamis Vibhooti and Satyabindu in Hindi.

Swamis Swayambhunath, Tyagaraj and Karmapremananda from BSY conducted yoga training programs from 3rd April to 12th July for prisoners in Bihar's jails: the Central jails of Bhagalpur, Buxar, Gaya, Muzaffarpur, Patna, Ranchi and Hazaribagh, and the District jails of Dumka, Purnea, Dhanbad, Saharsa, Jamshedpur, Samastipur, Chaibasa, Darbhanga, Daltonganj, Chapra, Sasaram, Hazipur, Arrah, Motihara, Phulwarisarif and Munger.

From the 10th to 16th April, yoga courses were conducted by Swami Gyanbhikshu at the Uranium Corporation of India for executives and their wives, and by Swami Gautam at the IOC, Vadinar, with classes for men, women and children.

A yoga training course was conducted by Swami Gautam at IOC Guwahati, from 8th to 14th May.



May

Returning to India via Singapore, Swami Niranjan spoke at the Sindhi Community Centre and at the Shiva temple.

A village yoga seminar was conducted at Jawayat, Bariarpur, from the 5th to 15th by Swamis Satyabindu and Padmapad.

Swami Vigyanchaitanya conducted a yoga camp in Jabalpur from the 15th to 21st May, inaugurated by the Vice-chancellor of Jabalpur University and closed by the mayor of Jabalpur.

A refresher class was conducted at Jabalpur Central Jail. A five-day remission of sentence was granted to prisoners who were practising yoga regularly.

Classes were conducted for primary school teachers at the Central School as part of a resource program, and for children at the Karate School, Jabalpur.

June

Swami Suryamani from BSY conducted a program for executives of the National Thermal Power Corporation Ltd, Vindhyachal Nagar, MP, from the 2nd to 8th.

Swami Sanyam and Sannyasi Yogashikshananda conducted a program at the National Power Corporation from the 21st to 30th.

Swami Vibhooti conducted classes in Mumbai from the 2nd to 6th, including a retreat at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences.

Swami Yogavijay conducted classes in Jaipur, Rajasthan, from 12th to 18th June. The program was organized by Sannyasis Srimukhananda and Harikripa.

Sannyasi Karmadhara gave yoga classes and satsang from the 25th to 30th at the annual convention of SPIC-MACAY (Society for the Promotion of Indian Classical Music and Culture Among Youth).



July

Swami Niranjana presided over the Guru Poornima celebrations at Ganga Darshan with a sadhana shivir, discourses and discussions.

Swamis Yogavijay, Satyabindu, Shivaraj and Dharmavrat conducted four yoga camps in Jammu from 18th to 25th.

Swami Yogakanti conducted a seminar for IOC in Haldia, WB, from 24th to 27th and a course for staff.

Swami Niranjana gave satsang at the Raipur ashram on the 30th.

August

Swami Niranjana inaugurated a Yoga Festival organized by the Gyan Darshan Yogashram, Bhilai, from the 1st to 3rd.

September

The 8th marked Swami Sivananda's 108th birth anniversary and the germination of yet another seed of his inspiration as the first official course of BYB was inaugurated at the Ganga Darshan campus. The four-month Certificate Course in Yogic Studies opened to students.

October

On the 3rd, Swami Niranjana inaugurated Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal (BYMM), the Children's Yoga Fellowship.

Swami Niranjana flew to Colombia for the International Yoga Convention held in Bogota, organized by Swami Kaivalyananda with Ignacio and Maria Teresa Copete. The convention was attended by spiritual leaders, doctors and businessmen from Colombia and other countries, who presented their own experiences of applying yoga in their daily lives to thousands of participants.

Swami Niranjana flew to Germany, met with devotees and delivered lectures at Bad Konig on the 28th. People from 12 European countries attended this gathering arranged by Swami Prakashananda.

November

The Sat Chandi Mahayajna was conducted from the 23rd to 30th at Sri Panchdashnam Paramahansa Alakh Bara in Rikhia, Deoghar. Thousands of people from all castes, creeds and religions came from many parts of India and the world to participate.

Sri Swamiji conducted satsang each morning. Satsang was followed by parikrama, reverently walking around the pooja mandap where the worship was conducted, distribution of prasada and darshan of the newly constructed Christ Kutir, adjacent to the Sivananda Charitable Dispensary. The entire pooja mandap and pandal were organized under the guidance of Swami Niranjana, who was also the yajamana or chief performer of the yajna, presiding over each ritual and pooja.

On the last day participants witnessed the first Kanya Poojan, wherein little girls were worshipped as manifestations of Devi, by Sri Swamiji and Swami Niranjana.

During this time Sri Swamiji passed on his spiritual and sannyasa path succession sankalpa to Swami Niranjana, when he presented him with a crystal ball and crystal mala, the treasures of his tantric life and achievements.

December

Swami Niranjana gave satsang in Bangalore for the Vivekananda Yoga Kendra Convention to an audience that included doctors, scientists, philosophers, psychologists, parapsychologists and yoga therapists. He inaugurated the buildings at the ELA ashram farm and conducted bhoomi pooja at the Vanaprastha Yoga Niketan Home for the elderly at Bangalore.



So what was really happening this year behind the flurry of activities? Bihar Yoga Bharati (BYB) – first and foremost – the seed planted by Paramguru Swami Sivananda manifested its first tendrils. He had dreamt of a yogic university conducted as a gurukul where students of all nations, races and creeds would live in the 'family of the guru' and study deeper aspects of yogic traditions. We have seen how Swami Satyananda, Swami Niranjana and a team of dedicated swamis, worked unceasingly to build up BSY from humble beginnings to an internationally respected institution. The hill which previously held the palace of Karna, legendary for his generosity in distributing gold, was now the centre of a movement distributing the wealth of yoga throughout the world. Swamis and yoga teachers were already placed as lecturers and professors at universities around India and overseas. At the World Yoga Convention in 1993, the participants first realized that sufficient groundwork had been done for Swami Niranjana to establish BYB in what would become recognized as a university-level gurukul. In 1994, the first official steps had been taken towards this and next came the lengthy process of establishing a university standard curriculum, tuning the education process, and gaining government recognition for its graduates.

Forty-two students completed the first four-month Certificate Course in Yogic Studies this year: two from Italy, six from Australia and the 34 remaining students represented the Indian states of Bihar, Orissa, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. Visiting lecturers included Dr Rishi Vivekananda and Dr Swami Shankardevananda from Australia, Dr Prof Indu Bhushan (Sannyasi Yogasindhu) and Dr Prof A.K. Ghosh (Sannyasi Mangalteertham) from India. The academic structure of the course rested in the framework of ashram discipline and was closely supervised throughout by Swami Niranjana.

Swami Satyananda's decision in 1994 to break his isolation and give a month-long opportunity for darshan acted as a crystallizing agent. In 1995, thousands more who flew to Rikhiya for his darshan learned of the significance of BYB's emergence and the ideals motivating its foundation. They were ushered each day to their seats by the radiant students of BYB's first Certificate Course, who undertook this task as part of their karma yoga. The inspiration led many of Sri Swamiji's most experienced disciples to renew their inner quest and commit themselves to contributing in whatever role they could, as students, administrators and teachers.

Swami Niranjana had established his team and the gurukul environment and was entrusting much of the work of developing BYB towards full government recognition to Swami Shankarananda, a dedicated disciple of Sri Swamiji since the sixties who spent 35 years in the Bihar Education Department and upon retiring as Deputy Director of Secondary Education, came to live in the ashram and received sannyasa initiation from Swami Niranjana in 1992. The Chief Director of BYB gives us this explanation of the new step for the institute.

Bihar Yoga Bharati

"Yoga deals with the problems of human nature and human exigencies through a vast repository of practical methods which aim towards purification, regulation and awakening of the human potential. At present, yoga is passing through a momentous period of growth, expansion and rapid integration into modern

society. At many levels we can see new developments as yoga is applied in different facets of life in new varieties of ways: as a form of therapy and as stress management for men and women, in education, in business, in the armed forces, in prisons, for children and for the aged, in villages, and in so many more ways. As we view the multifaceted yogic transition taking place around the world today, we begin to see why Swami Satyananda said many years ago that 'yoga is the culture of tomorrow and it will change the course of world events'.

BYB has its roots in the ancient past. Two thousand five hundred years ago, the state of Bihar was home to two great spiritual universities. One was the University at Nalanda, close to Rajgir, which housed more than 10,000 students, monks and scholars, many coming from far off lands. It was equipped with a library which was ten storeys high. The other was the University at Vikramshila, near Bhagalpur, where the study of tantra was emphasized.

Up to the present day, the science of yoga has generally been transmitted and taught in gurukul or ashram-style institutions by sannyasins or renunciates who had a spiritual vision but were unable to reveal the scientific and technical aspects of yoga in a systematic way. In order to preserve, present and regenerate the total scope and vision of the yogic science, a different kind of institution, which combines academic and scientific methodology with spiritual vision, is necessary.

Yoga is now being utilized in modern society in many ways; however, all of these applications remain at a very superficial level. To obtain a more comprehensive view of yoga and its potential utility within the society, we need to go much deeper. This can only be achieved in an institution which deals with yoga through a scientific and academic medium. For this reason, the idea of a yogic university was born, where scholars, scientists, medical practitioners and yogic aspirants of a higher calibre could study, research and develop a complete perspective of yoga and its potential uses within the society, in order to create a better future and a better world for the coming generations.

It was Swami Sivananda who first had the vision of a yogic university. He established the Yoga Vedanta Forest University in Rishikesh and envisioned that one day a scientific basis for the integration of yoga into modern society would be formulated. His inspiration was carried on by his disciple Swami Satyananda. All through his mission years, Sri Swamiji spoke about the necessity of regenerating a spiritual university along the lines of Nalanda and Vikramshila. As the plans for Ganga Darshan emerged and the huge ashram complex developed on the hill overlooking the Ganga, Sri Swamiji often speculated that one



day Ganga Darshan would be a yogic university where doctors, scientists and scholars would come from all parts of the world to study and research yoga. After Sri Swamiji entered kshetra sannyasa in 1988, Swami Niranjana took on the responsibility of realizing his guru's vision and, in 1994, founded and established BYB, which is the first institute in the world of its kind to impart comprehensive yogic education.

It aims to grant higher degrees in yogic studies such as MA, MSc, MPhil, DLitt and PhD. It offers a complete, scientific



yogic education and training, according to the needs of present times. BYB offers residential courses in a gurukul environment so that along with yoga education, the spirit of seva, selfless service, samarpan, dedication, and karuna, compassion, for humankind is also imbibed by the students. BYB will continue the work started by the ancient universities of humanity, and will be a pathfinder for the current and future spiritual awakening throughout the world in the spheres of yoga, Vedanta and tantra."

In 1995, Swami Niranjan also founded Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal (BYMM) which integrates yoga into the lives of children from their first days at school. A pathway has been opened up through the dust, uncertainty and lawlessness of life, as it used to be in Munger, as beautiful as the moon's path on water, but far more substantial. At one end is the introduction of yoga to little children and their empowerment, on the other a university structure to enable them to achieve their aims.

Children feel birthdays are important, and their willingness to take Swamiji's teaching to heart, yet celebrate his birthday somehow, eventually brought unexpected blessings to Munger. This rather

the birthday of someone who died 24 years ago, and took birth again in the form of a sannyasin.

In the tradition it is said that when one takes sannyasa and goes through the renewing fire of the viraja homa, one leaves this world and the guru gives a new birth through initiation. If you want to celebrate the birth of the living person, then I will also take part. The day for that is 11th January and this year was the beginning of my 25th year of sannyasa.

On that day I had a unique experience. We went from here for the Rajnandgaon Yoga Convention via Kolkata. I had been in Kolkata when our ashram was there and have also visited the city many times. I know all the lanes and avenues and



exasperated satsang on 14th February, addressed mainly to their mothers who had organized a surprise birthday party for their reluctant guru, started an inspired series of events which established the work of the children of BYMM a few years down the line.

Inspiration

"You always say that you have the right to celebrate my birthday. There is no fault in celebrating a birthday certainly, but why do you celebrate the wrong day? You are celebrating

people there, but the call never came from Mother Kali and I never went to her temple. But this time an inner inspiration came, the experience that the Mother was calling, and I went to her temple.

There was a big crowd. I thought we would not have darshan when an unknown person inside stretched out, took my hand and pulled me inside. To which place did he pull me? Just two inches away from the statue. Then we did pooja, gave offerings and came out. That event was divine. When we were standing

there, having darshan of that giant statue, one thought came in the form of a sankalpa.

When I first took sannyasa I thought that we should do meditation or sadhana to try to attain a higher state or become a self-realized person. Everybody has these ambitions but, on that day, I had the experience that every desire or ambition was finished. There is nothing left to do. I have no desire to progress in spiritual life or in sadhana.

At that moment I experienced intense detachment, I felt that there is no meaning in all these things and an inspiration came that for the rest of my time, even if it is thousands of years, I just have to do seva, service. Seva for guru and God.



I don't have any attachment to asana, dhyana, sadhana, talking to people, satsang or meeting people. I used to think that if I did all these things then people would recognize me, but not now. I don't have that desire for myself now. I am doing all this with the attitude of seva.

This change in my life on the 11th January was something I felt very intensely, and it is still with me today. It was a 360-degree turn, a full circle. After this an inspiration also came

that I should give this message to those people who are helping me, who are my guru brothers, sannyasins, karma sannyasins and well-wishers. There has been a change in my mentality and my concepts, and maybe in my habits and behaviour also. After deep reflection on this I came to the conclusion that the reason for the change is due to the Mother's inspiration and darshan.

Yoga darshan, theories and sadhanas, all have their own place or function. We must follow these paths but we should also have one more aim because, due to narrow mindedness and selfishness, we always try to fulfil our own desires. And desires are never ending. We spend our whole lives trying to

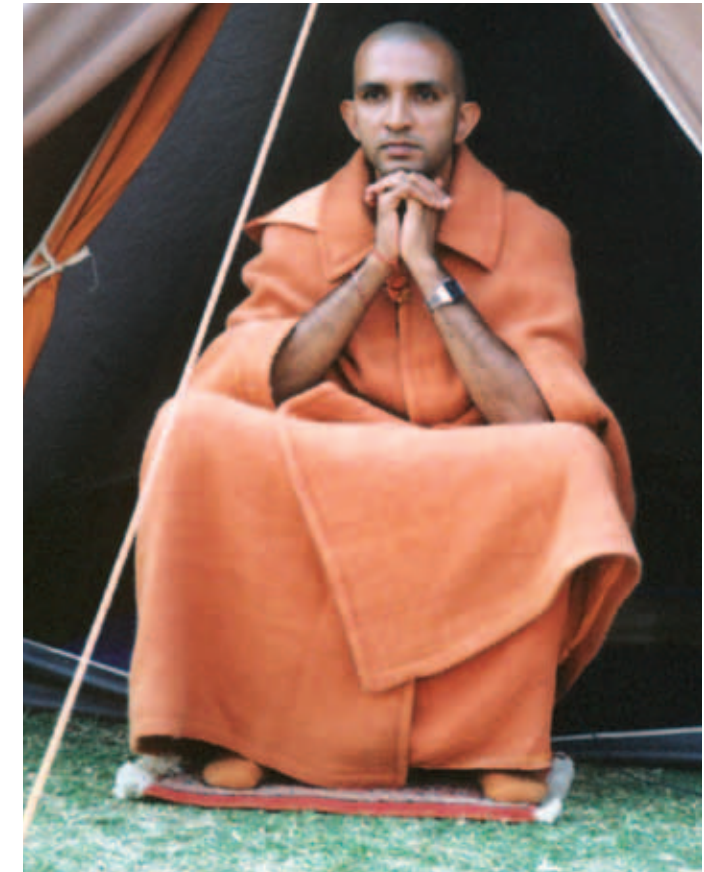


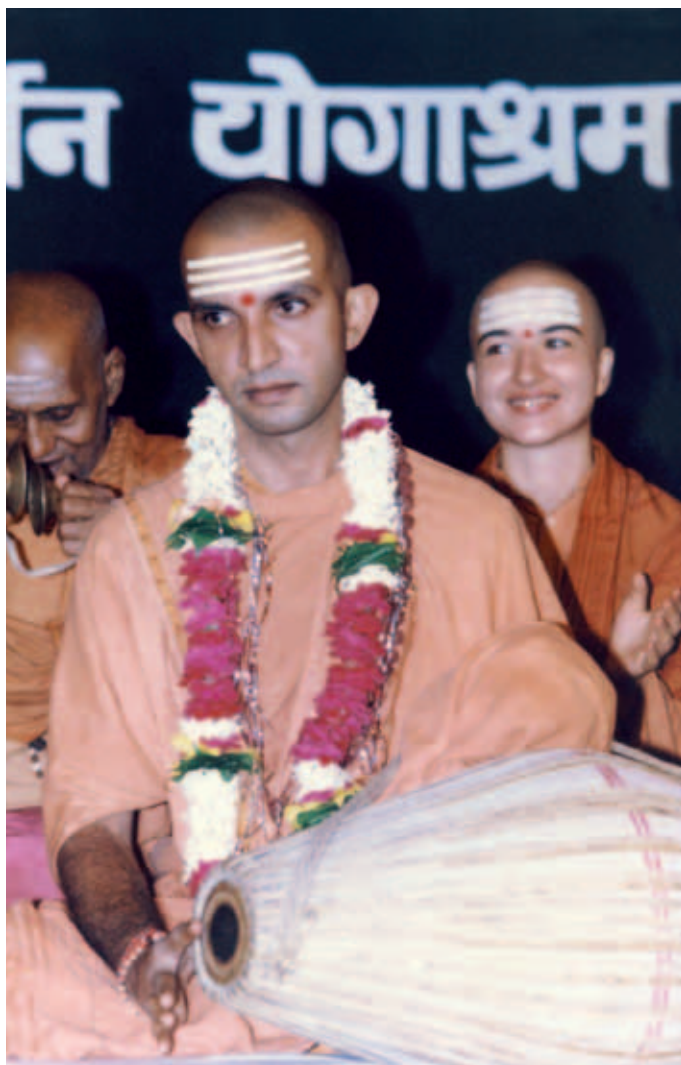
fulfil them. Maybe it's our destiny or karma or nature, so we are not renouncing desire. However, in order to transform or direct our desires, we can take a sankalpa. That sankalpa is, perform seva for humankind with your full ability.

When the attitude of seva comes into one's life, the perspective changes. You can say that you are already doing service through yoga. To try and cure a sick person is service, to try to give peace to an unbalanced person is also service, but seva is not limited to

this. The area of seva is very broad, but there is a practical difficulty because we don't know how to perform seva. We try to do service according to our desire and limit the field of service to one level. Because of this limitation, seva becomes a practical difficulty. When seva is taken as a limitless field and there is preparation for service emotionally, theoretically, intellectually, socially, physically and mentally, then seva is successful in uplifting humanity.

In order to perfect seva there should be preparation. To perfect seva you should be healthy and for that, practise whatever yoga is needed. Asana, pranayama, mantra japa, meditation, tapas, self-study, devotion, karma, all should be done, and the aim of self-realization should be kept in mind.





The need of this age is to have an attitude of seva towards others, and then compassion, affection, love and devotion will manifest spontaneously, and one day seva will become the new dharma.

My belief is that going to temples and having darshan of divine beings is not real darshan. The actual darshan lies within. Why can't we have the attitude that the woman who sweeps the roads

and cleans the toilets is our Lakshmi, our Parvati and our Uma? And that the man who works, who begs, who has no place to live, is our Narayana, Vishnu, Shiva and Indra? If we can awaken this attitude then our life will definitely be fulfilled and if we can't become the sun, at least we will become a candle flame.

There is a story in Sri Swamiji's old diary. Once, when the sun was setting he was feeling a bit sorrowful and thought, 'When I have gone there will be darkness in the world. Who will give them light?' Then he saw that in one corner of earth a small flame was shining. The flame said to the sun, 'I can see your concern clearly. Even though I am very small, I can definitely try to shine. According to my ability, I will remove the darkness.' The sun blessed the flame and said, 'Whenever you shine you will spread light.'

There is only one way to give light and that is seva. If sannyasins have come for sadhana, they can find another place. This place is not for sadhana. If they want to relate themselves with God or humankind then they should be ready to renounce everything and just keep seva in their lives.

So I have taken a new birth already. The day a person receives the inspiration to follow a new path is the day of rebirth. Gurudev gave me the inspiration to follow this path at the time of sannyasa initiation in the form of a seed, and on the 11th of January this year this seed became a small seedling. It took 24 years to sprout, maybe it will take another 25 to become a sapling and another 100 years to become a tree, but the process has begun. That is why I said the day you celebrate the birthday of the living person, I will definitely participate with my whole heart."

In Munger, BYMM, the organization for children, almost immediately created a dramatic change in the perspectives and practical opportunities available to its young members who were delighted by yoga practices, yogic games, clean halls, lifts and the whole ashram environment and population. Prabhat was elected the Founder President of BYMM. He and the young children of the organization were totally inspired,

and very inspiring. I asked him to speak first on their behalf and give us a glimpse into what began to happen in the streets and fields of Munger when the children began living yoga.

We are the harbingers of yoga

"I met Swami Niranjana in 1988 when I was in school, but attached myself to yoga in 1995 when I got a chance to live in the yoga ashram with my father. While living there I met some school children who lived near my house and we decided to give yoga a chance in our life.



At that time we also met our big brother, Vikas Kumar, who told us there was a yoga competition being organized in Chandigarh, and encouraged us to participate. For one month, with the blessings of Swamiji and our parents, under the guidance Vikas bhaiya, we used to practise regularly for five or six hours daily. But unfortunately, we couldn't go to Chandigarh and thereupon we became extremely sad. We expressed our feelings to Swamiji and he inspired us to establish Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal. With the guidance of Swamiji, we the



children of Munger have become the harbingers of yoga in the land of spirituality.

In 1995 we began with only seven children, but over these years we have specialized in making child yoga teachers. With their help we have visited a great many schools in Bihar, MP, Delhi, WB, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and trained thousands of children. Thus we are slowly and steadily progressing towards our aim of yoga education for children by the children.

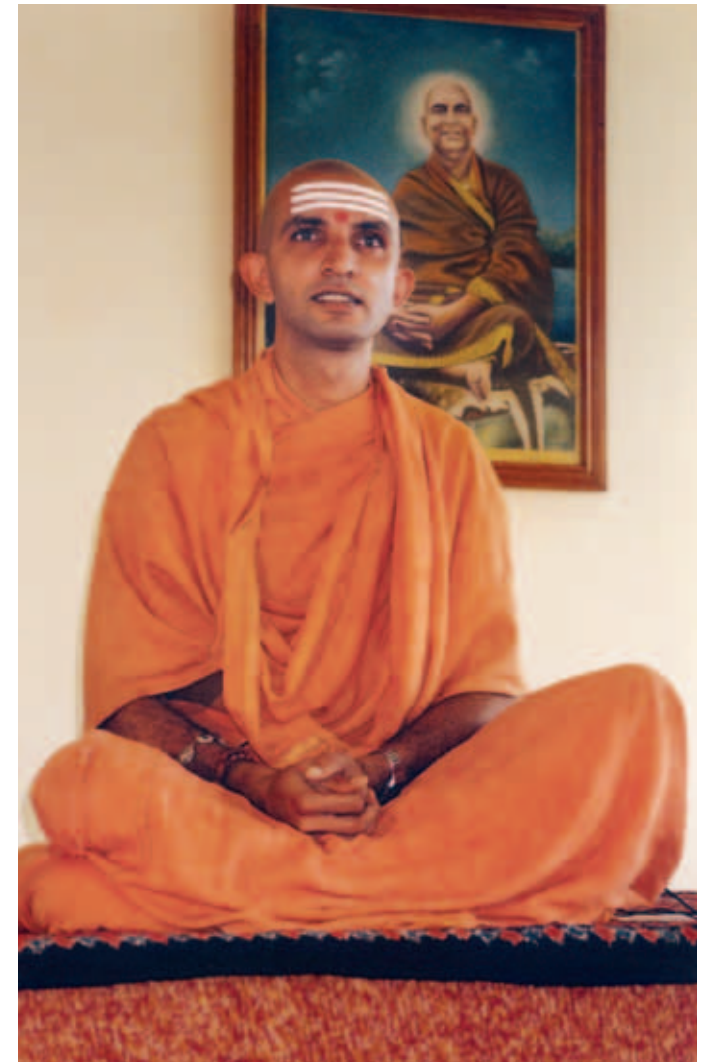
One of the special features of BYMM is the open yoga session in the Polo Ground of Munger, in which more than 5,000 children participate every year. This mega-show is managed and coordinated by young children themselves. In order to impart modern education with traditional values, Swamiji started five weekly classes of English, mantra chanting, karate, Ramayana and Bhagavad Gita study, and painting. It is his wish that the girls of Munger should learn karate and the boys mantra chanting.

With the blessings of Swamiji, we, the children of Munger, are successfully spreading the mission of Swami Satyananda. Swamiji always says to us, 'More than success, the aim is to be a person of value.'

Swami Niranjana knows how to care for and inspire children, how to speak with and listen to them, as Dr Gopala can testify. In the nineties, Dr Sannyasi Gopalananda from Colombia was travelling to conventions with Swamiji and helping to care for students of Yoga Health Management Courses at Ganga Darshan. He seems to take special pleasure in helping people, and this is his account of what drew him here.

The seed will remain

"I was five years old when I met this boy. He was about 12 or 14 years old. He was also very strange, he wore orange clothes, had his head shaved but, most amazing of all, he was the nicest guy I had ever met. He gave yoga classes and played with children my age. In fact, I was very confused



because his classes were so serious he seemed to me to be an adult, but he also played with kids like me. He was called Swami Niranjana.

During that time we came to India with a big Colombian group to stay at the original BSY, in what was then called the Sivananda Ashram (the big seven-storey building was then a sankalpa, not a reality). We stayed in the ashram for about



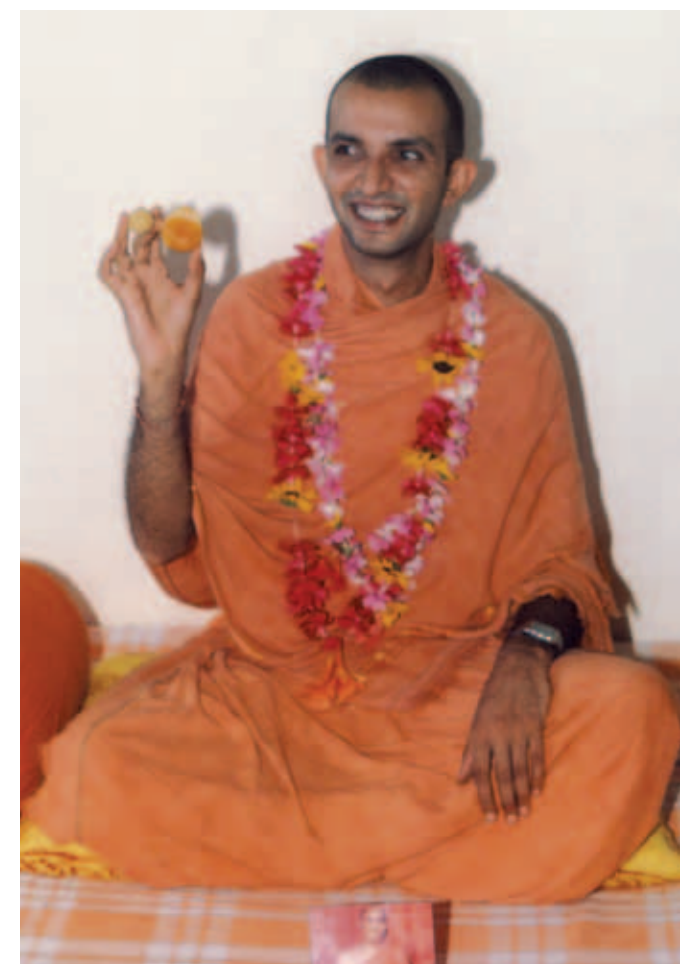
a month. I used to run around with Swamiji and other kids. I remember feeling very happy in those days.

From that age these two facts are the only ones my memory can recall: meeting Swami Niranjan and coming to the ashram in India. From the years that Swamiji spent in Colombia, my mother has many stories but there is one which is very nice. She says that Swamiji used to eat so many chocolates she was always afraid that he would get sick, and every time she caught him eating them she would stop him although she felt very sad because the scene was worth watching. Years later when she met him again she wanted to give him a good present and it came to her mind that the best present she could offer was a

box of the finest chocolates she could get. But when she gave them to Swamiji, waiting for that incredible scene of a boy completely delighted and unaware of the world around him when he was eating chocolate, she got a surprising remark. He said, 'I eat them no more'. My mother says she was so frustrated she wanted to go back in time and give the chocolates to that little boy. She hadn't realized that he was now over 20.

My mother also fondly remembers the outdoorsy, adventurous aspect of his personality from these times. The fearless adolescent was riding horses bareback, easily getting the animals to abide by his will as he would attempt all kinds of daredevilry such as tent-pegging. He was practising archery,

which he was exceptionally good at and learning to fly a Cessna plane. At skating rinks, people would spot this geru dhoti fly past as he did his thing! 'Not once did I fall,' he told me later. The first time he played golf, he won a trophy, and the first time he took a driving test, he scored 99 percent! I think outstanding might be a small word to describe his talents. And then he would spend hours at a morgue, unflinchingly dipping his fingers into autopsies with a friend. Later in the US, he was skiing in Colorado and drove cross-country, from the East Coast to the West Coast, thrice.



In fact, I met him again in the USA, but I remember I didn't understand my emotions at the beginning, and he was something else. I did not identify him with the guru, I identified him with the most beautiful experiences I can remember from the age of five, the games we used to play, his tenderness, his affection, his respect for kids under his age, his yoga classes and the games after them. Those memories and the emotions they brought made me jump all over him when I saw him the first time in the USA. I wanted to embrace him and play with him as in those days, but he was now 20 and I was 13 years old.



I now saw a different phase of him, I saw Swami Niranjana as a great lecturer. What he said moved people deeply, and again he left a seed that has been growing in my heart since then. In 1982 I returned to Colombia from the USA but that seed was pulling me to India. I wrote a letter to a friend telling her that I had fulfilled my dream, my sankalpa to come to India and the ashram when I finished my medical school.

It is really amazing how the very important facts of your life clearly manifest themselves, not as a product of your will, but of a greater, indescribable force. I say this because since the death of my father, a very important fact in my life, many

things have come about. Before my father died, I was lost and didn't know what to do with my life. I felt myself to be a complete failure. I had a dream of studying medicine but with my low school grades, it was just a dream, and my motivation and willpower were 'underground'.

Then suddenly the unexpected: my father's death. I was no longer allowed to be the eldest brother in a young family, having no motivation or expectations. Don't ask me how it happened, it just happened. I graduated from school a month later, and a month after my graduation I was studying medicine. During the years in medical school, my internship and whilst in government service, many things happened



which reminded me it is not my will which governs. If I had been left alone I would not have been able to do even half of the things I have done.

Why do I tell you all this? Because when I came to the ashram in 1993, I looked at Swamiji, heard his lectures again, I saw his eyes, and all the memories came to my mind. And the answer to the question, 'Why have things been like this



for me?' was answered. It is because when I saw him a seed was left in me, just as it happens to everyone when they meet Swamiji. Even if it's not noticed, it happens, people may not realize or understand it at first, but they do later, though it could take one year or twenty years.

You can even stop seeing him for a long time, the seed will remain there waiting to be nurtured and watered by your good

desires, your mystic thoughts and your willingness to follow the path of spirituality. If we are sincere with ourselves, the seed will start sprouting little by little, the dreams will come true with God's help through Swamiji.

And one thing I would recommend. Don't wait for your father's death before you wake up. Just meet Swamiji and make the effort to learn and apply his teachings."



So much has been happening externally in the way yoga has been introduced into the lives of individuals, social institutions and cultures around the world. This is the exoteric aspect of yoga, devotion manifesting through karma yoga and seva. But to understand the true nature of events we must look at the inner causes. What has given sannyasins the energy and vision to work so effectively? The relationship between guru and disciple is the living heart of sannyasa; it involves each aspirant in an inner search for their real nature.

We hide from ourselves. Not only do we misunderstand and distrust others, but we fear ourselves also. In yoga, the attitudes of awareness and acceptance are of paramount importance. As a child of tantra, yoga looks at all aspects of human nature openly and innocently, seeking to understand and release the energies trapped within so that we can accept ourselves as we really are.

For everyone the Sat Chandi Yajna was an experience where one stepped into a transcendental world. The scent and overpowering visual beauty of the flowers, the resonance and archaic patterns of the mantra chanting, the wholeheartedness of the kirtans, the wisdom of the paramahamsas and the joy of their dancing – *amrit*, the immortal nectar, was given to us to drink and the very atoms of our beings were transformed.

The Chandi Yajna and the interaction between guru and disciple created an atmosphere so charged with energy and meaning that many disciples and devotees spontaneously experienced heightened states of consciousness. The skill the gurus are teaching, however, is to maintain and utilize such insights in our daily lives minute by minute, year in and year out, through all situations, for the good of humanity, indeed, for the good of all beings.





Surely this is the skilfulness of yoga: right action even on the field of battle. Although it remained unspoken, this year was the preparation of hearts and minds for the 12-year Rajasooya Yajna, performed by a conqueror in the ancient vedic tradition. And indeed, Swami Satyananda, Swami Niranjan and their sannyasins have been at the forefront of spreading the knowledge of yoga throughout the world in its time of need. As we experienced then, and as he explained much later, Sri Swamiji is truly the conqueror of hearts.

At the heart of this wave of energy and inspiration lies the deep commitment of Sri Swamiji and Swami Niranjan to expressing the inner realization of yoga in selfless service, giving the wealth of yoga to those in need, regardless of caste or creed. At the Chandi Yajna, Sri Swamiji confirmed Swami Niranjan as heir to his spiritual wisdom and power and presented to him, as symbolic gifts, the crystal mala and crystal lingam which had aided him in tantric sadhana. Swami Satyananda's own words express this best.



An Open Secret

"Today Swami Niranjana has received his initiation. The initiation is over. The Mother will be the witness and so will all of you. I am handing over to Swami Niranjana the two greatest assets of my tantric life, the crystal mala and the crystal lingam. And I feel assured that he will lead you all through the encircling gloom. Whenever there is darkness in life one forgets the way. He is the one who can tell you where to go and what to do. He has been with me since his birth, but in 1983 I handed over my succession to him. Now it is 1995 and he has completed his twelve years.

It was twelve years of a hard and strict life that he had to lead. Most of you new Munger sannyasins don't know me. I am as fierce as Bholenath. I have never been a sweet guru. Many, many disciples have failed because they thought, 'What kind of a guru is he? A guru should not get angry.' But Swami Niranjana accepted me as I am. Unless a disciple accepts the guru as he is there is no salvation for him and no way for him. You should not want the guru to adjust to your image.

So Swami Niranjana has come out with flying colours. And it is not that I nominated him after seeing him. Before he was born, before his mother conceived him, I told his father and mother, 'My successor will be born through you.' Swami Dharmashakti gave birth to him and she is here today.

Today the Mother Goddess is the witness and all of you are witnesses that I have handed over the two priceless treasures of my spiritual life to Swami Niranjana. One is a crystal mala and the other is the crystal lingam. Swami Niranjana has worked very hard. Generally disciples want to see the guru in their self-created image. They think, 'I should have a guru who is the way I want him to be.' If such is the case then the disciple becomes the guru and the guru becomes the disciple! But Swami Niranjana never tried to see me in his image. He always had the feeling, 'Whatever you want me to do I will do.'

I have always been a tough guru. People used to say that I was a horrible man, but Swami Niranjana accepted me as I was. If you really want to get your guru you have to accept him in his true form. Once you have decided, 'This person is my guru,' then you must accept him as he is. Try and mould yourself in his form and not mould him in your form. It is very difficult to be a disciple. Nobody becomes a disciple simply by getting initiated, nobody becomes a disciple by simply smoking the pipe of the guru.

When a carpenter wants to make something from a piece of wood, he fashions the wood in his own way. The piece of wood is chiselled and filed, but it does not question the carpenter. The cloth does not question the tailor. Leather does not question the shoemaker. I appointed Swami Niranjana as my successor in 1983. Now twelve years have been completed and I have handed over the crystal mala and lingam to him. I have full faith that he will come as a divine light into your spiritual lives and that you will receive everything from him.

Swami Niranjana has been with me since his birth. He has given me everything, his youth, his future, his entire life. He has no wife, no child, no bank balance, no property, no ambition and no desire, except service. He underwent sannyasa initiation when he was eleven years old. Now he is undergoing tantric initiation. The purpose of this Sat Chandi Mahayajna is to transfer what I have to Swami Niranjana. This cannot be done verbally; it is psychic transmission, shaktipat.

Although tantric initiation is secret, it is not secret in the sense that it is done in a closed room. I am initiating Swami Niranjana through a secret process, but as all of you are witness to it, it is an open secret. What God and guru have given me was all received by transmission. I received the blessings of my guru and of God not by verbal exchange, but through transmission. I have given them to Swami Niranjana in the same way and now he becomes the guru.

I decided to organize Sat Chandi Mahayajna because people have been asking me for guidance, although I have repeatedly

said I no longer want to guide anyone spiritually. Society, friendship and love mean nothing to me. That is the dharma of a paramahansa. I want to enter into deep silence, and I have come to Rikhia for that purpose.

Swami Niranjana has taken over the spiritual charge from me. I have made no other choice. There should be no confusion about my successor. Now he has to become a global man. A guru has to be able to impart spiritual power to his disciples. For this, Swami Niranjana has undergone initiation at this tantric ceremony of Sat Chandi Mahayajna. To look after the spiritual life of disciples, it is not enough to be a teacher. There is a difference between a guru and a teacher. A guru also has to give insight into spiritual life, and for that, initiation has to be imparted. When you go deep into your mind, the path is uncharted. Only guru can help you to remove the covering of darkness. Swami Niranjana is now ready for this, and then I become free.

Now I just want to rest here in peace. I do not want to meet anyone. Here we chant only God's name. By shouting slogans you merely try to raise the profile of gurus. I have lived this long life without any effort at making a profile. Neither a low profile nor a high profile; I believe in no profile. A true guru never makes any profile. Everybody wants to be higher and higher; nobody wants to be low. If you considered yourself to be lower, then you would rise to the greatest of heights. Nobody becomes a guru by rising high in the eyes of the public. Guru is not a social status.

Therefore, Niranjana, today we pray to the Goddess, to the Mother, that she may make you into a medium for her expression, as she made me. Now I am taking the connection wire from here and putting it into you. Remain in contact with the Mother and keep everybody else on the right path. Do it in your own way, not in my way. My way was the way of the stick, you know that. Guru and disciple both have their own natures."

Namo Narayana

BYMM: A Children's Movement

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

One day in 1995, seven children from the Munger town came up to me and said, "Swamiji, there is going to be a yoga championship in Chandigarh and we want to go there." I said, "Go ahead." One week later these children came back and said, "Swamiji, our parents could not organize our journey, we have had to cancel our program." I told them, "If you had gone for the competition, you might have simply received a document, a piece of paper saying that you participated in the

yoga competition. You might have even received a document saying that you excelled in yoga practice. But where would that have got you? Why don't you instead create an organization where grown-ups don't give certificates to you, but you give certificates to grown-ups instead?" This is how the seed of Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal (BYMM) or Children's Yoga Fellowship was planted in 1995.

The Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal was established with seven children, who became the nucleus of a movement which has in 2004 grown to include over 80,000 children devoted to yoga. These children are not only devoted to or practising

yoga, they are fully trained and well-versed in yoga. In Munger itself there are over 2,800 child yoga demonstrators, over 600 child yoga instructors, and over 400 child yoga teachers or propagators.

This is a movement which is managed by children, for children and created by children, all in the age group of 10–14. The mandate given to them incorporates three principles: *samskara*, appropriate performance in life, *swavalamban*, independent effort, and *samskriti prem*, love for culture. By receiving good samskaras, they are able to live a good life. Swavalamban means being like the river that finds its own path – not being dependent on anyone but possessing the ability to stand on one's own feet and being happy. The third aim, samskriti prem, refers to the spirituality-based culture of this country. To love and identify with this culture is an aim given to these children. Samskriti has been defined as *samyak kritena iti samskriti*. When every behaviour and action in life is *samyak*, balanced, then this balance is called samskriti. So the BYMM children associate with these three aims in life. Yoga is something they learn naturally, as part of their play, but when they go out in the world they carry these three acquisitions with them.

The children receive their training through a four-year syllabus. It is a progressive course in which the last stage of training is that of a yoga teacher. So at the age of fourteen they are qualified yoga teachers with four years of experience. For one year they have to be yoga demonstrators when they are introduced to yoga practices and learn asana and pranayama along with the theory associated with the practices so they have some idea of what yoga postures can do to their body.

In the second year, they are taken to another level and become yoga instructors. As yoga instructors they are taught intermediate group of practices along with more theory. At this level they also learn yogic games, which help improve their awareness, concentration, attention span, creativity and memory. In the third year they are promoted to yoga



propagators when they are trained for one year in advanced yoga techniques.

After completing three years of training, if they wish, they can become a member of BYMM. And when they cross the age of 14, they can join another children's organization – Children's Youth Yoga Fellowship, Bal Yuva Yoga Mitra Mandal. There is a third organization – Youth Yoga Fellowship, Yuva Yoga Mitra Mandal, for those above 18.

Each organization has a different function. In the Children's Yoga Fellowship we train them in yogic principles, theory and practice, teach them how to take classes and practise yoga,

and give them some exposure outside in conducting classes in schools at different locations. During summer holidays, BYMM conducts a massive five-day yoga training program for about 6,000 to 7,000 children. They manage this entire program; Bihar School of Yoga has no role to play in that.

The members of the second group, Children's Youth Yoga Fellowship, between the ages of 14 and 18, are sent out to different cities to help organize seminars, programs and conventions, and to conduct classes on a short-term basis of 15 days or one month. The members of the Youth Yoga Fellowship are given training to go to rural areas, to calamity

affected areas, and work for the development there, whether it is service, relief or any other work.

The children come to the ashram every weekend and spend the whole day at the ashram. Besides yoga, they also learn music, self-defence, chanting, painting, music, literature, languages and scriptures, and they are exposed to different levels of yogic culture. And over a period of three years, with continuous association with the ashram, they develop into children with special qualities. They develop immense self-confidence and can do anything under the sun.

I have found that these children who have adopted yoga are exceptional. Their brain, their mind, performance, comprehension, memory and creativity is blooming.

When yoga becomes a part of children's life, it comes alive in them. They express yoga naturally whereas we have to think, 'How would a yogi behave under these circumstances?' With their yogic background, these children can change the world. Where we have failed, they will succeed. Therefore, I call the Children's Yoga Fellowship the crowning glory of the Satyananda Yoga tradition because it also reflects care and consideration for the future of the earth, civilization and humanity. In fact, if such a movement could take place all over the world, it will solve many of the problems that teenagers face today.

Swami Sivananda used to say that the mind of children is as sensitive as the microphone of a tape recorder. It can pick up everything from the environment. Children are, by nature, intuitive. The intuitive faculty is very active till the age of eight. But when intelligence kicks in, when they start going to school and learning a, b, c, d and math, the education process overshadows the intuitive nature and stimulates the intellect. However, the intuitive receptivity can be stretched till the age of fourteen with the practices of yoga. And after fourteen when other hormones kick in, then they need another set of yoga practices. But by then they already have a very good



foundation of asana, pranayama, the meditative and mantra components of yoga. They develop a deep understanding of things which one would consider impossible for a child. This is how we teach yoga to children.

My priority is these children. And the one rule which I made for them was: absolutely no grown-ups in this organization and no interference from any person. No sannyasin can interfere in their routine, talk to them or tell them what to do and what not to do. They are my children. They are my wards. They are not a part of the ashram. The president of BYMM is a little nine-year-old girl and the committee is comprised of children. Being the spiritual mentor of these 20,000 children in Munger, somebody whom they look up to, their concern is my duty, but the ashram is not associated with BYMM.

They are the new generation of tomorrow and are bound to contribute to the strengthening of Indian culture. Today, these children are receiving the ideals and samskaras that they could not receive from their guardians. We feel extremely happy to see the self-confidence, sincerity and diligence of these children when they move in the outside world. We are looking towards the future of our society and country through these children. The beautiful combination of diligence and sensitivity in their life will help in the redemption of our culture.

One of the significant achievements of BYMM was a scientific investigation the children themselves conducted involving 700 of them to test the effect of yoga on five parameters: memory (long-term and short-term), concentration, recall, personal discipline and creativity. There were 350 children in the yoga group and 350 children in the control group. Over a period of four months the results were observed and psychologists analyzed them. I presented this research to educationists in Europe, as a result of which UNESCO approved yoga education in 17 countries of Europe.

Their second achievement is holding of the biggest yoga festival for children in Munger during their summer vacation every year. For five days, between five to eight thousand children come in the morning to the grounds in front of the ashram and practise yoga during this festival. For five days the entire city becomes a yoga city.

The third achievement is taking yoga to the rooftops. For one week every year, these children teach yoga to their parents, family members, neighbours and guests on top of

the roofs of their homes. During that period, if you were to go over Munger on a helicopter, you will see them on every rooftop, teaching yoga.

Their greatest achievement, however, has been the relief work they have been involved in. A few years ago there was a big fire in Munger and about 300 homes were gutted. At that time, the children of BYMM undertook such a beautiful aid distribution and relief work that even the Government of India wrote to us for a detailed project



report so they could use it as a model for National Disaster Management Programs.

These children make me feel confident that the next generation will be a dharmic generation. *Dharma* means eternal obligation and the three pillars of dharma are appropriate thinking, appropriate behaviour and appropriate action. These children who are being trained in yoga will have a dharmic personality and they will make a difference to our society, our nation and our world. The work done now will

show results two generations down the line. Therefore, we need to encourage children and bring them to the forefront. Children don't need protection; they require freedom and guidance to connect with their own creativity and confidence. This is the message that Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal conveys.

Yoga has truly flowered in the lives of these children. Many of you practise yoga, but yoga has not flowered in your lives. You are teachers of yoga, not experiencers of yoga. These children are experiencers of yoga. In Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal, the grace of



the guru can be seen very clearly. Most of these children were born after Sri Swamiji's departure from Ganga Darshan. Their parents were young when Sri Swamiji was living in Munger and many of them were in contact with him then. Now they have given their children the opportunity to adopt yoga.

Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal is a movement, a tremor in the ground which can become an earthquake. It is a movement of children, and these children are waking up. When the President of India visited Ganga Darshan in 2003 and heard of BYMM, he said, "Munger should be called the city of yoga." He named Munger 'Yoga Nagari' – City of Yoga.

At the children's invitation, the President visited Munger again to celebrate the first Children's Yoga Day, Bal Yoga Diwas, with them on 14 February 2004, and the entire planning and execution of the President's visit was done by the children. The organizational skills that they displayed at that time were extraordinary.

There is a lesson we can learn from children. It has been said that the child is the father of man. If we can emulate the father, we might become a better child. ॐ



January

Swami Niranjan conducted satsangs at Bariarpur from the 12th to 14th, organized by the Yoga Mitra Mandal, accompanied by Swami Satyabindu and Sannyasi Gyanchaitanya.

The 33rd Foundation Day of BSY was celebrated on Basant Panchami with havan, kirtan and satsang with Swami Niranjan.

BYB commenced its first one-year Diploma Course, marking the next step in establishing the university. Visiting lecturers included Dr Nirmal Thapur (Sannyasi Harikripa) from India, Swami Janakananda from Sweden and Dr Sannyasi Gopalananda from Colombia.

BSY sannyasins conducted yoga training programs in four central prisons in Bihar: Patna, Bhagalpur, Buxer and Hazaribagh.

Swami Shivaraj conducted classes for the Indian Army for officers from the rank of lieutenant to colonel and for jawans of the Jammu-Kashmir Light Infantry Division in Danapur.

February

BYB's second Yoga Certificate Course in English

commenced with 28 students from India, Australia, USA, Bulgaria, New Zealand, Germany, Spain, Italy, Colombia and Yugoslavia.

Swami Satyadharma spoke at the Steel Authority India Ltd, Ranchi, on the 8th and 9th.

Dr Swami Dharmavrat conducted a program for doctors and medical students at Ganesha Shankar Vidyarthi Memorial Medical College, Kanpur, from the 22nd to 26th.

The Indian Oil Corporation continued to deepen its association with yoga throughout February and March:

Swami Yogakanti and Dr Sannyasi Mangalteertham conducted a stress management program at IOC's Management Institute in Haldia, WB; Swami Vigyanchaitanya held a yoga camp in Mourigram, and Swamis Gyanbhikshu and Vibhooti conducted

a yoga training course in Guwahati.

Swami Niranjan visited Australia from the 22nd February to the 5th March.

March

Swami Niranjan conducted a convention in Kolkata from the 9th to 10th, organized by Satyam Seva Kendra.

A program was conducted by Swami Satyadharma in Mumbai from the 10th to 18th.

A yoga program was conducted at Ajmer Yoga Mitra Mandal from the 21st to 28th by Sannyasi Nityachaitanya.

April

Swami Niranjan attended an All-India Yoga Convention in Sambalpur, Orissa, from the 2nd to 5th. A medical symposium



was held and Swamiji spoke at Gulan Medical College. An HMC was conducted in Deoghar from the 5th to 13th by karma sannyasins from Munger Yoga Mitra Mandal. Dr Swami Dharmavrat gave lectures at a conference on diabetes organized by the UNESCO Club on the 6th and a yoga camp at Darbhanga Medical College from the 9th to 16th. Sannyasi Tattwaprakash conducted yoga classes in Bilaspur for the Piparwar Project from the 9th to 28th. A program to introduce yogic life to children was conducted in Rajnandgaon by Swami Sanyam from the 20th to 29th.

May

Morning and evening classes were conducted for executives of the Indian Institute of Coal Management, Ranchi, by Sannyasi Tattwaprakash for one week.

A general yoga course was conducted for Hindalco at Renukoot, UP, from the 14th to 28th by Sannyasi Gyanchaitanya.

June

An HMC for general problems was held from the 5th to 20th by Swami Atmabhishek at Ganga Darshan.

A Children's Course was held at Ganga Darshan from the 5th to 20th by Swami Padmapad.

Swami Niranjana presided over a National Yoga Convention at Bilaspur, MP, from the 6th to 9th.

On the 10th he travelled to Korba and delivered talks at six venues. The program was organized by BALCO, NTPC, MPEB and the local Yoga Mitra Mandal.

Swami Niranjana attended the final session of an Introductory Yoga program organized by Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal, Munger, at

the Polo Ground for over 5,000 children.

A yoga camp was conducted at Indian Oil (Pipelines Division) in Barua, Rajasthan, from the 24th to 28th by Swami Satyadharm.

Yoga Teacher Training Courses for prisoners were conducted in eight Central Jails in Bihar between the 25th June and 25th July. A total of 176 prisoners, all lifers, completed the course and received certificates.

A yoga camp was organized by the Assam Vedic Samaj from the 30th June to 7th July with Swami Gyanbhikshu.

July

A yoga camp was conducted for NTCP (Korba) from the 8th to 13th by Swami Hrishikeshananda.

A Kriya Yoga Course was conducted from the 15th to 21st by Swami Satyadharm.

Swami Niranjana conducted the Guru Poornima celebrations along with Ramayana chanting at Ganga Darshan, from the 20th to 28th July, including a sadhana shivir on the 29th. On the 30th, Guru Paduka Poojan was celebrated.

An HMC for digestive problems was held in Kolkata from the 28th July to 10th August by Dr Swami Dharmavrat.

August

BYB conducted its first postgraduate course in the Department of Yoga Philosophy with Dr Prof Swami Gyanbhikshu as Head of Department. Swami Niranjana gave a series of lectures to set the standard of presentation.

A yoga camp was conducted in Jaipur from the 19th to 26th by Swami Padmapad and Sannyasi Nityachaitanya.

September

The second anniversary of BYB was celebrated at Ganga Darshan on the 8th, Paramguru Swami Sivananda's 109th birthday.

BYB's Certificate Course in Yogic Studies began with students from India, Australia, Italy, Germany, Yugoslavia, France, Argentina, UK, USA, Nepal, Korea, Netherlands, Sweden and Spain.

A one-month Teachers' Training Course for police cadets was conducted at Rajnandgaon Ashram by Swami Sanyam.

Swami Gorakhnath conducted a program in Mumbai for the



Great Eastern Shipping Co. from 28th to 29th September and from 30th to 4th October.

A yoga camp was conducted in Jabalpur from 30th of September to 5th of October by Sannyasi Nityachaitanya.

October

Swami Niranjan presided over the World Yoga Convention at the Sydney Showground, Australia, from the 10th to 13th. The theme was 'Health, Education and Evolution'. After the convention, residential courses were conducted at Mangrove Mountain ashram and Swami Niranjan gave satsang on Vedanta and 'Evolution of Consciousness'. The first course was conducted from the 16th to 20th by Swamis Pragya-murti, Vedantananda, Anandananda, Sivamurti, Prakashananda and Dr Swami Shankardevananda. The second course, from the 24th to 27th, included classical Indian singing

by Lalita Sharma and classes by Dr Rishi Vivekananda, Dr Swamis Nadamurti and Shankardevananda, and Swamis Vedantananda, Bhaktipoornananda, Nityabodhananda and Gyanmandala.

Sannyasi Gyanchaitanya conducted a yoga therapy camp in Devaria, UP, from the 6th to 11th.

A program was conducted from the 7th to 13th by Swami Swayambhunath at Asian Knitwear Ltd, Jammu.

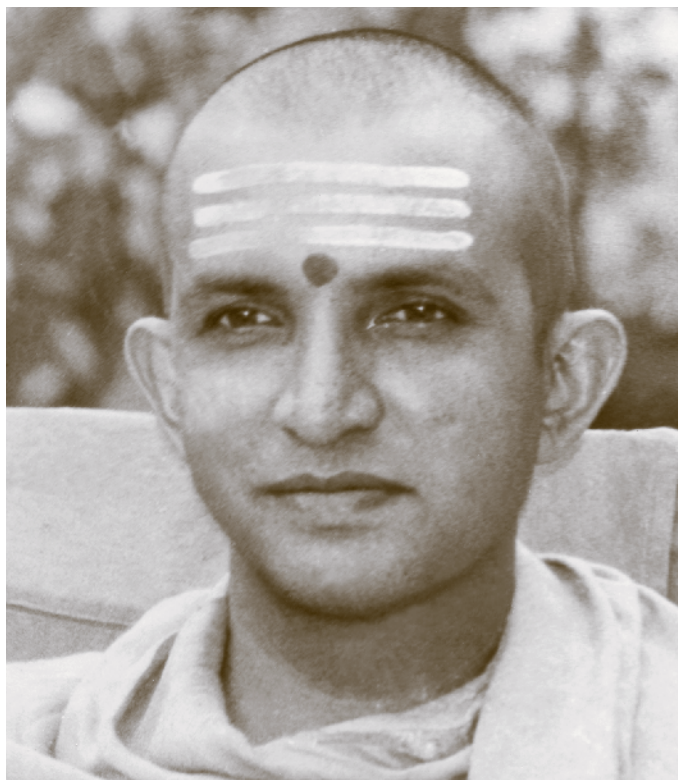
A program for teachers from Mumbai was conducted at Ganga Darshan from 28th October to 5th November. Students from BYMM assisted with the demonstrations.

November

'The Integration of Yoga, Bhakti and Science in the 21st Century' was the theme at the International Yoga Mahotsav in New Delhi, inaugurated by Swami Niranjan. The chief guest was Dr V.S.

Mehta, Vice-Chancellor of Delhi University. On the 1st, Swami Niranjan addressed scientists at DIPAS (Defence Institute of Physiology and Applied Sciences). On the 2nd, Swamiji gave a research based lecture at a seminar organized by NIEPA (National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration) and NCERT (National Council of Educational Research and Training). At Pragati Maidan, Swamiji and the chief guest, Dr H.S. Wasir, Head of the Department of Cardiology at AIIMS, addressed the gathering. On the 3rd, Swamiji addressed doctors at Sitaram Bagrodia Hospital.

On the 5th and 6th, Swami Niranjan gave satsangs at a Yoga Convention in Jaipur, organized by Sannyasis Srimukhananda and Harikripa in conjunction with the Rashtriya Yoga Parishad, Rajasthan. Children from BYMM, Munger, and Jaipur demonstrated yoga practices.



December

From the 26th November to 24th December, devotees from all corners of the world visited Paramahansa Alakh Bara in Rikhia to participate in the spiritual sadhana of Ram Naam Aradhana. Swami Poonyananda Giri, Mahamandaleshwar of Niranjani Akhara, addressed the event. The spiritual ecstasy of the Sikh kirtans and the mastery of the world renowned master, Pandit Jasraj, made all hearts resound in harmony. The grand finale was the program of Kuchipudi dances performed by Dr Sampat and his troupe. Swami Satyananda, Swami Niranjan and Swami Satsangi were continually guiding events. The slogan for the festival was 'Hara Rikhia Bhara Rikhia – Green Rikhia Prosperous Rikhia'. Farmers were given high quality seeds and agricultural implements, children received educational books and sewing machines and clothes were distributed.



Throughout this year, Swamiji's programs appeared to be aimed at, on one hand, reawakening the spirit of yoga at the grassroots level and, on the other, establishing it within contemporary frameworks. A significant event pointing in this direction was Swamiji's interaction with scientists at DIPAS (Defence Institute of Physiology and Applied Sciences) in New Delhi. During the seminars conducted here, Dr Selvamurthy, its director, presented his extensive research on the effects of yoga on the body and mind and its therapeutic significance while Swami Niranjan emphasized that the modern holistic definition of health validates the ancient yogic teachings.

At the World Yoga Convention in Sydney 1996, the theme of 'Health, Education and Evolution' indicated the direction

Swamiji chose to develop. Speakers on health included Dr Rishi Vivekananda, who explained how to incorporate yoga in any therapy, and Dr Roger Cole, who emphasized the importance of meditation for people with terminal illness. Swamiji concluded the sessions by speaking of the fundamental importance of acceptance in the yogic attitude to disease.

The second theme was education. Swami Yogabhakti documented the gradual inclusion of yoga in the French education system and the pivotal work of RYE. Maureen Garth, educationalist and psychologist, outlined the importance of visualization techniques in relieving stress and worry in children. Dr Greg Tooley from Melbourne University presented the latest research on the importance of melatonin on regulating the pineal and pituitary systems in managing stress and cancer and its relation to meditation. Swamiji emphasized the importance of the mother's role in the first seven years of a child's life and the importance of including yoga in the school curriculum.

The third theme was evolution. Swami Janakananda from Scandinavia explained how increased awareness of the thought process relaxes the whole personality. Dr Swami Shankardevananda distinguished between what is chosen by us and what is decided for us. The chief guest was Prof Hiroshi Motoyama from Japan, a leading figure in research on chakras and nadis. Swami Niranjan again explored the nature of the mother's role in the home, family and society.

BYB was growing fast. The one-year Diploma Course in Yogic Studies began, with the minimum educational requirement being successful completion of 12 years' formal education. The Certificate Course proved extremely successful in attracting applicants from around the world. Many Indian nationals requested that the Certificate Course should also be conducted in Hindi and BYB took up the challenge. In this year Postgraduate Degrees were also offered for the first time and the officer-bearers of BYB were installed.

Swami Niranjan, who has authored so many of the authoritative works on yoga recognized throughout the world, was made the Chancellor. Amongst his disciples were also



qualified academics with years of experience in university management and lecturing.

Swami Shankarananda was appointed Chief Director and began exercising his administrative skills and know-how. Swami Satyasangananda was the Registrar, ably assisted by the Assistant Registrar (Administration) and Assistant Registrar (Examinations).

To head the three Postgraduate Departments, Dr Prof Swami Gyanbhikshu was appointed for Yoga Philosophy, Dr Prof Sannyasi Yogasindhu for Yoga Psychology and Dr Prof Sannyasi Mangalteertham for Applied Yogic Science. Swami Satyadharm

was appointed Director of Undergraduate Studies, Dr Swami Nirmalananda as Course Doctor and Swami Yogakanti as Student Welfare Officer.

Why were these BYB courses attracting so many people? One factor to be recognized is the immense prestige that the distinctive style of teaching propagated by BSY established. The integral nature of the practices taught, and their constant emphasis on the all-round development of the personality has become a hallmark. In today's society we need official training, qualifications and recognition in our chosen fields, but undoubtedly the chance to become part of the guru's family in the gurukul environment of Ganga Darshan is a major contributing factor.

Sannyasi Atmatattwa, who has been spreading the yogic wave in Europe, reminisces about her days in Ganga Darshan.

Guru ganga

"A remark in my journal from Munger in the mid 1980s reads '...One Swami in particular stands out. He is exceptionally eloquent and clear. There is a feeling of lightness around him. His name is Swami Niranjana.'

A later journal entry in 1992 written while participating in his astonishing sannyasa training course reads '... playful, poetic,

musical, witty, childlike, creative, humble, elegant, graceful, resolutely dedicated and devoted to his guru, immensely authoritative, exceptionally intelligent with a vast intellectual capacity and highly developed intuitive capacity. All the qualities that reflect the outcome of being a bal yogi and having an awakened mind. Swami Niranjana lives and upholds the eastern tradition with profound depth of knowledge, experience and understanding, and yet knows how to live among and communicate with the western world. Rare to find one who can move freely in, and between these two worlds with complete ease. A modern-day computer boffin who is conversant with the most complex and subtle aspects of the ancient shastras.'

During this six-month training period a diverse group of 108 of us had gathered from all over the world. Swamiji was running a very tight ship and there were no frills or luxuries such as telephone access, visits from the market man or the dhobi, or weekend trips out to town. We left the campus just twice, once to register at the police station and once to go to Rikhia to have darshan of Sri Swamiji. Mouna was very strictly enforced and maintained, not just from dusk to dawn, but during all meals and tea breaks, in the sadhana hall and (apart from absolutely essential instructions) during karma yoga time. There was a



three strike rule which, if broken, meant one could be kicked out. We spent several months with each other, all day, often without speaking a single word to other participants and yet learned so much about one another without the customary distraction of words, gossip and social chitchat. No need to say 'Good morning, how are you today?' Sensitivity rose, and one started to be able to pick up and perceive very accurately how others were feeling just by walking by them in silence.

Although Swamiji told us not to have any expectations, we felt he had at least some from us which we mostly failed to live up to. He gave and he gave more still during those six months. My diary says, 'It feels that Swamiji is slowly, and occasionally with barely disguised impatience at our tamasic minds and bodies, pushing us uphill. We weigh heavy as a group and are slow to absorb the huge amount of information and concepts he is imparting to us so articulately.'

It felt like we were part of an experiment; that he was trying to use us as guinea pigs for the nightly meditations he conducted, which have since been transcribed and systematized in Dharana Darshan. Casting pearls to swine some might say, as all too often we sat sleepily, our heads nodding, stuffed with a roti too many after dinner, as yet another fantastic dharana practice was given to us.



His patience was phenomenal, endeavouring to wake us up, keeping us on our toes, changing our timetable constantly so we couldn't get into any automatic ruts or habitual ways of thinking or behaving; delivering astonishing satsang after satsang (which provided the material for Sannyasa Darshan and Yoga Darshan, two classical treatises on yoga). Like Lord Krishna, he spoke lucidly for many days revealing new angles on limbs of yoga: karma, jnana, hatha and raja yoga; detailed systematic talks on yamas, niyamas, practical aspects of yoga asanas from the Upanishads, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, samadhi, dharma, prajna, tejas, atma, the esoteric aspects of yoga, mantra yoga, laya yoga, and then when he asked if there were any questions relating to this high philosophy that had poured out of him in a

luminous stream, someone would ask about their constipation or a broken toe, to which he would sigh (nearly imperceptibly), but then humorously and tolerantly reply to.

Over Christmas, he suddenly decided we should have a break from the routine and devised the 'Ashram Olympics' with a wide range of tasks, races and games to play. For three or four days, one was able to speak to course mates for the first time, and any veils of pious spirituality were rapidly removed, as the nationalistic and often fiercely competitive natures revealed themselves in the name of 'sporting activity' all under his watchful and bemused eye. After the awards had been presented by him, it was back to business.



After four months of this very dynamic process, when I thought he was really putting us through our paces, and that we were at last starting to perform reasonably well, I remember being shocked when Swamiji said, 'Pah, you people are only operating at about 30 percent capacity. Tomorrow the morning class (which he led nearly every day) starts at 4 am instead of 5 am.' And woe betide anyone who came five minutes late or without having taken a cold shower first, they would be sent back out to have one, in January!

Being fortunate enough to participate in this extraordinary time with Swami Niranjan had an impact that can be compared to a rocket taking off inside, the energizing and inspirational

effects of which motivated me from then until the present day to dedicate to this path and which will take the rest of this lifetime and beyond to even begin to fully imbibe and for which I remain deeply grateful."

Through the tribulations and trials of ashram life, what sustains one is, without doubt, the connection with guru. As I found myself paired with my young friend for a special seva of 'shine the toilets', she was once again full of questions. Cleaning the toilets of the ashram, of course, has brought many an epiphanic moment for almost everyone who comes here!

"I am wondering what happens when you go away from the ashram. Does the connection still remain as strong?" she asked.

"A long-standing and deepening relationship with the guru is essential for spiritual training, but this may not take the form of physical proximity," I replied. "Swami Niranjan himself has spent virtually all his life under the training of his guru, but for several of those years he was in distant lands."

Swamiji gave us a glimpse of what this meant in an informal satsang one day.

The connection of spirit

"At the age of eleven I had the privilege of being escorted by Sri Swamiji to Europe. We flew from Delhi to London and



then went to Belfast where he had a week's stay conducting some programs, seminars and lectures. He then left me under the tutelage of Swami Atmanandaji who was at that time the head of the Belfast Yoga Centre, and returned to India. I lived with her for quite some time when I would teach, sing and lecture also.

From there I moved on to other parts of Europe: England, France, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Spain and Portugal. Then I went to South America and at that time the establishment in South America was about six months old. In order to propagate yoga and contact people, all four of the swamis who were there at that time went on a Colombian tour, visiting about 30 towns and cities. That was a one-month tour, and we were a team of about eight people, travelling in two cars.



After that, in 1973, we started preparing for the Tyag Golden Jubilee of Swami Sivanandaji and also the 50th birthday of Sri Swamiji. In this context I travelled to Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, and then up north to Panama, San Salvador, Guatemala and the islands. With a group of South Americans I returned to India for the 1973 Golden Jubilee Convention in November and stayed for three or four months, returning to Colombia in 1974. After travelling around Colombia and South America for quite some time I went to Australia for the World Yoga Convention in 1976, toured Australia and returned to India in 1977.

In 1978 I went to Greece, then Switzerland and then to Spain. From Spain I used to travel to different countries, and this continued for a couple of years. In Spain, once Sri Swamiji came and said to me, 'Now you should go to North America.' So I began thinking how I could do it, because I didn't have any money, the ashram was not capable of sending me, and I did not

want to ask for any help. So, in my head I wondered how. Then of course, by conducting programs, courses and seminars, I was able to collect enough money to go. Sri Swamiji had also given me a target; I had to be in America by March 1980. All this was happening in the late part of 1979, so with three months in hand I was able to raise enough money to buy myself a ticket.

In those days I used to have a recurring dream. In the dream I used to fit pieces of a jigsaw puzzle together, and in every dream I would fit one piece. Only in the dream would I know which piece I had put in the jigsaw puzzle, and I would have a very clear memory during the dreamtime – it is the thirteenth piece today, it is the fourteenth piece today, like that. On waking up I would know that I had dreamed of a jigsaw puzzle but I wouldn't know which piece I had put in. I had applied for an American visa. The day I got it, that night I put the fiftieth piece of the puzzle together and I looked at the whole picture, it was the outline of North America! So I said, 'Well, everything is auspicious', and within three days left Barcelona and flew to North America.

On the 1st of March, 1980, I landed in New York with 68 dollars or so in my pocket, and I did not know anyone in New York. Where to go? What to do?

My first task was to contact Sri Swamiji's disciples. One was Swami Prashantananda and he came with a pick-up truck so I said, 'Come on, we'll go on a tour through America from town to town. We'll do programs and contact people.' He agreed to it so we started on a trans-American tour through the US. From Los Angeles, through Las Vegas, Reno, Salt Lake City, then going across to Denver, travelling like that conducting seminars, lectures and classes. In this way we were able to earn some money, contact quite a large number of people, return to California and establish the first ashram in San Jose. We started our classes in a road-front shop, 700 square feet. People whom we had contacted on our travels came for living and training, teacher training and special seminars, and we used to travel around California conducting weekend programs.

In 1981, I did another tour of the States, this time opening ashrams in eight different states and installing yoga teachers



to run them. Then we felt we were ready to invite Sri Swamiji. He came and toured America in August 1982. After his tour I looked for some land in East Coast Virginia, 100 acres of forest in the Virginian mountains! I returned to the ashram in late December, just before Christmas, and there was this telegram: 'Return to India by 16th January 1983.' That gave me only 20 days, and in vacation time everything was booked, no possibility of arranging a ticket or anything, but somehow everything was managed and I landed in BSY, Ganga Darshan at 11 pm on the night of the 16th.

While I was out I did not get the chance to come in contact with Sri Swamiji that much, especially in America because it was quite far. Reflecting back, I feel that he was there with

me all the time, and guiding me, because I don't think that something human could have done what was done in America within a period of two years. It was definitely divine grace which had accomplished a lot – from landing in America with a few dollars in the pocket to running flourishing ashrams and purchasing a property of 100 acres in a respectable state. It was definitely superhuman guidance and the presence of Sri Swamiji was always felt.

When one is far away there is a constant awareness of the person we respect and revere, and to whom we have dedicated ourselves. The mission becomes important, not the person. So I have never actually identified with him physically, although I love him very much. I have never thought that I



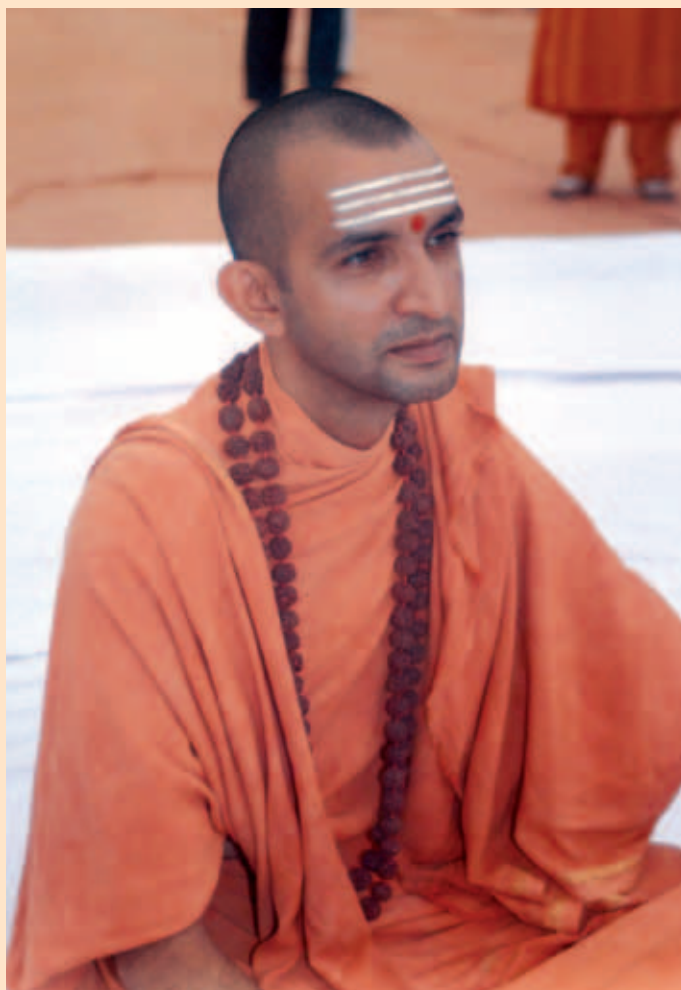
can't live away from him, or without him, nor had emotional problems because of that. Definitely, a very strong and intense feeling of oneness with him is there, it's the kind of feeling that cannot be verbalized. Once he asked me, 'Do you want to return to India?' and I said 'No'. He asked, 'Why?' and I said, 'What will I do there? If I am away from you, I am thinking of you and working and living for you, the aim which you have given to me in my life. But if I am with you then I am aware only of you.'

That has always been my sentiment. Even today I feel that he is here. Wherever I look I can see him, and it is not a thought or fantasy, it is real. It is very real. Wherever I look I can see his presence, energy, guidance, direction and inspiration. I have

looked at Sri Swamiji from this point of view, not as a person but as an inspiration; as continuous, constant inspiration and guidance in everything I do, everything I feel, in every way that I act or behave. And in the form of inspiration he is part of me. This is something which I have been privileged to follow, experience, feel and cherish."

The seed of yoga that Swamiji sowed in the US, was nurtured by many over the years. Swami Atmarupa, though she received her initial rite of passage into yoga in Australia, returned here and found herself inadvertently turned into a yoga teacher, a fact she attributes entirely to guru's grace.





Shaved clean!

"I first set my eyes on Swamiji Niranjanananda in March, 1995, as I sat down to receive mantra and spiritual name diksha. When I looked into his eyes, I felt a connection that stirred something inside me – something I didn't realize I had been seeking until that very moment.

Over the previous decades I had received the darshan of many spiritual masters while trekking in the Himalayas to pilgrimage sites, travelling through India, and while living in Kathmandu. In

fact, I had just come to Rikhia following a week-long program in Dehradun with the Dalai Lama. I was staying at the ashram to visit my friend Swami Nirmalratna. For many years, she had been slowly introducing me to more and more yoga, beginning with classes at the ashrams in Australia in the mid 80s, to seeing the lifestyle of sannyasa in India. Here she convinced me to take initiation from someone I had never met. And with a leap of faith, I agreed.

After initiation, she said, 'Now you should start teaching yoga.' I laughed thinking who would take yoga classes from a fat person! I returned from India to my life as an anaesthetist and householder, not really understanding the depth of what it meant to be given initiation – this connection to guru. I figured I would do my mantra, tell a few select people about my spiritual name, and go on with my life. Soon I was asked to teach a yoga class for fat women. Teaching grew to a few classes for all sorts of people in my home. In the meantime, the profession that had sustained my enthusiasm for over 20 years became increasingly difficult and I found myself leaving it and looking for a larger place to teach more yoga. In 1997, the Atma Center was opened, and within a few years I was teaching 18-20 classes per week. No one had heard of Bihar School of Yoga.

Fast forward to December 2007. While stopped at the samosa stand between Munger and Rikhia, I felt compelled to approach Swamiji and ask if it would ever be appropriate for me to take poorna sannyasa. His answer was, 'Yes, tomorrow.'

The following day I was waiting by the ashram gate for the barber to shave my head before the diksha ceremony that was to occur in minutes. As Swamiji passed me on his way there, I told him the barber had not arrived yet and he replied, 'Don't worry Atmarupa. I will shave you from the inside.' Truer words could not be spoken.

I don't see Swamiji often. But despite the great physical distance between us, he inspires me daily. As I face the difficulties of growing Satyananda Yoga here in the States, I can



feel Swamiji guiding me. Whenever I feel discouraged or tired, I simply recall watching him in India – his energy, his awareness, his intelligence, and his devotion. I think about his life and his relationship with Sri Swamiji. I am in awe of his discipleship. His very essence inspires me.

And although there are still moments of doubt, I continue to surrender. I have faith in his wisdom and guidance. Slowly he shaves me and helps me cut through my own nonsense. I will try to remain grateful for every stroke of his blade."

Applied Yoga

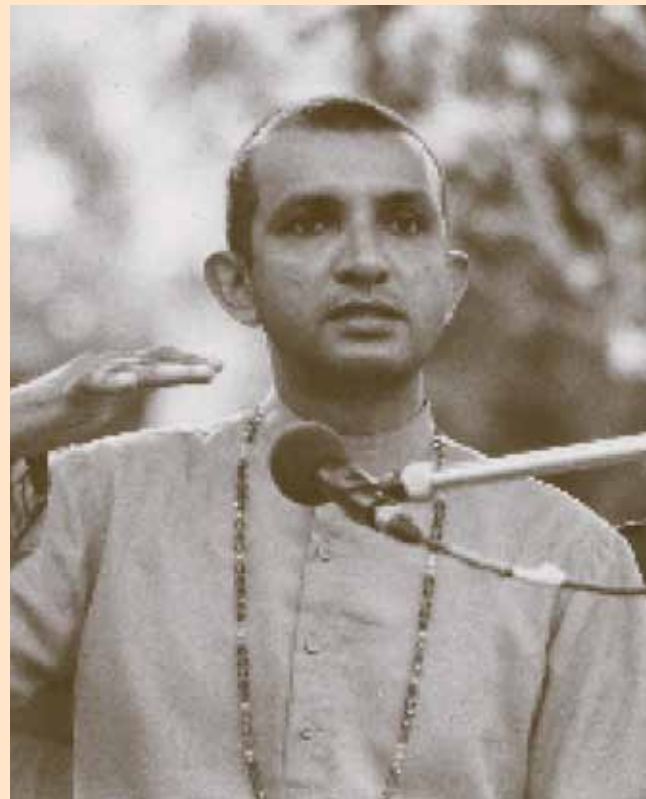
Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

A part from personal training, yoga also incorporates the aspect of social application. Yoga can be experienced in three different categories. The first is the personal learning process that we undergo when we begin our yogic journey. The second is the application of what we have learned to improve our life and our society, and the third is our effort to enlighten ourselves. This is the system of Satyananda Yoga, personal practice, application and the process of rediscovering oneself. In many systems personal practice and realization are given importance, not the application of yoga. If we apply yoga after our personal learning, then yoga takes on a different meaning and we are able to go deeper into the yogic experience. The process of yoga allows us to discover ourselves in a more spontaneous and natural way.

In the absence of that effort, yoga is seen only as a physical practice and denounced by many people. There is sometimes a criticism that yoga focuses too much on the body, because hatha yoga teachers around the world do not go beyond the body, but limit themselves to loosening up the muscles and joints in order to have a great physical experience. If we are able to bring in the component of human transformation, which has been the effort of Satyananda Yoga from the beginning, everyone will benefit. We do not subscribe to the idea that yoga is only for self-development, samadhi or personal emancipation. Swami Satyananda has given us a focus and a sankalpa when he says, "As long as there is suffering in the world and as long as there are tears in people's eyes, you are committed to serving humanity." We should all take that message to heart.

However, in order to share the yogic experience one has to be properly trained. The training allows one to know

oneself by undergoing that transformation through yoga, so that eventually what one has is not bookish knowledge, but experiential knowledge. In order to become a good yoga teacher, one should be able to recognize the needs of other people and teach what other people require, not what you want to teach them. We know kriya and



kundalini yoga, but we don't go into prisons and teach kriya yoga. The requirement there is different. We don't teach kundalini yoga in schools. So the tools and tricks of the trade have to be learned in classrooms and once you have a full understanding of yoga, you can apply it in various institutions in society.

We are not going to discover new things in yoga. There is greater possibility of discovering new things in science and medicine, but no possibility of new discoveries in yoga. The possibilities that we are looking for are the right combination of yoga practices in different situations, to make yoga a package so it can be incorporated in different areas, different fields of society.

At BSY, we try to reach all those areas and levels of society which need yogic intervention. This work is happening in India on a larger scale. At present we are working with the Indian army, the sports authorities, the railways, the prisons, medical colleges, schools as well as villages. Each project is important because it entails taking yoga to the professional levels of society.

We are working with different medical hospitals and associations for research into the physical benefits of yoga for management of diseases such as diabetes, asthma, and disorders of the digestive and cardiovascular systems. In addition, yoga is being taught to doctors and medicos. In Bihar, a project was undertaken in which a team of doctors and swamis visited medical colleges and conducted specific yoga therapy training programs for medical students and doctors, which resulted in an approval by the Bihar Government to teach yoga therapy to the 16,000 registered medicos in Bihar. Entering the medical area opens up the possibility of yoga becoming a complementary therapy along with allopathic science.

We are teaching yoga in prisons, not to reform criminal mentalities into socially acceptable mentalities, but to help the prisoners maintain their sanity, health and peace. If, as a result, the criminal mentality diminishes, so much the better. The reports that we have received from the convicts so far are very encouraging. Many have felt the benefits and effects of the practices and therefore taken to them in a positive manner. Many 'lifers' have also become yoga teachers.

The third project which we have undertaken is yoga activity in villages. We send swamis out with a team of volunteers from the villages to live together for ten days and do every type of work from cleaning the drains, clearing the roads, to teaching yoga, conducting satsang, listening to the villagers' problems, trying to help them, and also introducing a very simple understanding of the yogic literature. We have had fantastic results in this area.

We selected some of the most crime infested areas and the results were very heartening. In two villages, approximately 300 people took the sankalpa to leave firearms.

The Indian Army has introduced yoga into their training programs, not for physical fitness, but to deal with psychological and emotional problems of the soldiers, especially in high altitude and desert areas where they

are isolated from the normal structures of the army and society. We conducted the first yoga camp for the soldiers in what is known as the highest battlefield in the world, at 22,000 feet, in the Siachen Glacier which is the border for five countries: India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Russia and Tibet (China), and also in Ladakh and the desert areas near Bikaner in Rajasthan. Yoga training programs are now conducted regularly in different units of the army.



We also developed a yoga program for the first Indian cosmonaut when he researched the practices of yoga in zero gravity. The Sports Authority of India sends its selected sportspersons to Ganga Darshan every year for yogic training. Training programs are conducted on a regular basis for executives of the Indian Railways.

Yoga has also been applied in industries and corporations to assist both management and workers and increase company productivity. We have been teaching yoga in the coal, natural gas, paper, steel and other sectors. As a result of the yoga training, labourers become more efficient, administrators feel relaxed and more in command of their decision-making ability, and achievements are improved.

In the early 1990s, Bihar School of Yoga was involved in teaching yoga to the management and workers of the Indian Oil Corporation, to improve worker efficiency and increase company productivity. For two years we managed the human resources department of IOC without interference from the company. The results? First, there was an overall improvement in the physical and personal well-being of employees. Second, there was a big reduction in expenditure on medical care and sick leave. In one year, productivity improved by 37 percent, just through human effort and the connection with yoga, which is a great achievement.

So these are the social applications of yoga which we are attempting. Our centres around the world also have different focuses and aims according to the capacity and proficiency of the teachers.

In Italy a lot of work has been done with disabled people, mentally challenged children and old age homes.

In Greece the focus is on taking yoga education into schools, colleges and universities, to give a new experience



to beginners in yoga through seminars and to bring knowledge of yoga to the community.

In England work is being done with HIV patients. It has been found that many who participated in the classes have shown a marked improvement in their physical and physiological conditions. In rehabilitation of alcohol and drug addiction, yoga has been applied throughout Europe on a big scale. The London centres also teach yoga in prisons around London and the response of the convicts to yoga has been very positive.

In Australia yoga is used in cancer support clinics, in prisons, in schools. One interesting project in the professional work area involved yoga teachers going to different companies to give yoga nidra during lunch breaks.

All these developments indicate how society is accepting yoga into its fold. The aim is to make yoga available for various applications in society. From a bunch of ragtag swamis, we are going professional. This is the fulfilment of the vision which Swami Satyananda had for the yoga movement. ॐ



January

Swami Niranjan conducted a one-year Sannyasa Training Course for Indian nationals at Ganga Darshan. One distinctive feature of this course was that as Swamiji continued to travel extensively in India and overseas, these trainee sannyasins had to call on their inner faith and commitment from the beginning.

Swami Niranjan conducted a yoga gathering in Mumbai from 16th to 22nd, accompanied by Swamis Vigyanchaitanya and Yogakanti, Dr Sannyasi Gopalananda, Vikas Kumar and children from BYMM, who conducted programs in venues around Mumbai.

Swamiji spoke to Rotary Club members at the Taj Hotel, at BARC, to staff members of the Indian Psychiatrists Association, and to senior police officers at Police Headquarters. He then travelled to Thane for a retreat, followed by a presentation of music by tribal children.

A yoga retreat was conducted by Swami Vibhooti at Atma Darshan, Patna, from the 20th to 25th for Christian monks and nuns from South India.

Teacher Training Courses for police were held

in January, February, March and April by Swami Sanyam and Sannyasi Yogashikshananda.

February

Swami Vigyanchaitanya conducted a program for the Training Department of IOC's Mathura Refinery from the 2nd to 8th. Children from Delhi Public School and the Central School received yoga training for five days.

Swami Satyabindu from Yoga Darshan Ashram, Sambalpur, conducted a program at the Officers Club, Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd, Burla, from the 13th to 20th.

Programs were conducted at Indian Oil, Haldia, by Swami Yogakanti and Dr Sannyasi Mangalteertham from 18th to 20th and 22nd to 25th.



Swamis Satyadharma and Shivaraj conducted a program at Tata Mining Corporation at Noamundi, Singhbhum West, from 24th February to 2nd March.

Swami Hrishikeshananda from Satyam Om Yoga Vidyalaya, Bilaspur, gave classes at Bilaspur District Jail from 3rd to 9th. From the 10th, Swami Niranjan presided over the Basant Panchami celebrations at Ganga Darshan, which included havan and performance by the Pandavani dance troupe from MP, led by Smt Shanti Devi Chailak. The Imam-E-Sheriat of Bihar and Orissa, Sri Wali Rahmani, was the chief guest.

February–October

Under Swami Niranjan's guidance, to commemorate Sri Swamiji's Sannyasa Golden Jubilee, yoga yatras were conducted by BSY sannyasins in 50 villages in Bihar; by Swami Atmabhishek, Ajmer Yoga Mitra Mandal, from Sitarampur to Sultanganj from 20th February to 10th March; and by Satyananda Ashram, Rajnandgaon, from May to October in 52 villages in Rajnandgaon and 12 in the Bastar District. Swamis Dharmaraj and Sureshwarananda from BSY, Sannyasis Dharmatattwa, Yogashikshananda, Danmurti and Anandswaroop conducted the camps.

March

Swami Dharmakeerti conducted a yoga workshop in Mumbai from the 19th to 24th.

April

Swami Gorakhnath conducted a yoga workshop organized by the yoga wing of MECON Sports Club, Ranchi, from the 5th to 13th.

A yoga camp was conducted in Varanasi at Kabir Keerti Mandir from the 6th to 12th by Swami Vigyanchaitanya. Programs were conducted for Tibetan students at the Central Tibetan Institute for Higher Studies at Sarnath and at the NCI English Training Institute.

A yoga camp was conducted at Darbhanga Medical College from the 21st to 25th, organized by Dr A. K. Gupta, Associate Professor of Cardiology.

Swami Niranjan presided over the first European Yoga Fellowship (EYF) gathering at the Centre des Congres in Aix-les-Bains, France,

from the 24th to 27th. He flew to Slovenia, then to London, Llandeilo and Pantypistyll in Wales, and Glasgow, Aberdeen and Edinburgh in Scotland before returning to India.

May

A yoga training camp was conducted at Sant Viours Higher Secondary School, Ambikapur, from the 5th to 31st.

Kondagaon Yoga Mitra Mandal organized five yoga seminars with Swamis Asheshananda and Sanyam between 6th May and 11th July.

A residential children's program was conducted from the 18th to 29th at Rajnandgaon Ashram.

June

Swami Niranjana inaugurated a four-day Yoga Satsanga Samaroha, organized by Ananda Darshan Yoga Ashram in Bhagalpur from the 5th to 8th. Dr M.Q. Tauheed, ex-Vice-chancellor of Bhagalpur and LNM Universities, was chief guest.

BYMM, Munger, organized the world's largest Introductory Yoga Course for Children with more than 6,600 participants from the 12th to 15th.

BYMM, Munger, organized a residential Child Yoga Propagator Course from the 8th to 15th at Ganga Darshan with Swami Padmapad.

A one-month yoga training program was held at NTPC, Korba, from the 9th June to 8th July by Swami Hrishikeshananda.

July

Swami Niranjana presided over the Guru Poornima program held at Ganga Darshan from the 18th to 20th.

August

On the 1st, Swami Kaivalyananda was recalled by Swami Niranjana from Colombia to assist with the administration of BSY.

BYB's Yoga Diploma Course commenced with students from Australia, England, Malaysia, India, Latvia, Switzerland, Austria, Spain and Iran.

Two teams of eight children from BYMM, Munger, went to Delhi to teach yoga to children in 6 primary and 6 secondary schools. Swami Yogakanti accompanied the children during the month and

conducted classes for teachers, parents and yoga sadhakas, while the BYMM children taught their peers and older students. Each team stayed in Delhi for two weeks. Approximately 2,300 school students from 12 schools and colleges received yoga teaching. The program was organized by Sannyasis Shantananda and Srimurti, and sponsored by Dr Agrawal of the Sri Aurobindo Centre.

September

From the 8th to 12th, Swami Niranjana presided over the anniversary of BYB at Ganga Darshan, the 50th Sannyasa Jayanti of Sri Swamiji and celebrations of Paramguru Swami Sivananda's 110th birthday.

From the 5th to 19th, a yoga camp was conducted by Sannyasis Chinmayananda and Ravishankar at the Goenka Dharmashala



for Nehru Yuva Kendra from 16 districts in Munger.

From the 21st to 27th, Sannyasi Chinmayananda and Rajeev Kumar from BYMM held a Yoga Instructor's Course for 20 schools at Sivananda Ashram, Munger.

October

Under the guidance of Swami Niranjana, a Yoga Mahotsav, preceded by over a month of yoga classes throughout the rural areas of Gujarat, was held in Ahmedabad from 16th to 19th.

BYB's Certificate Course in Yogic Studies in English commenced, attracting students from Norway, Australia, Israel, Uruguay, Nepal, England, Greece, Ireland, Spain, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, France, New Zealand and India.

Swami Atmabhishek from BSY held yoga classes at the National Nehru Yuva Kendra, Noida, from the 6th to 22nd.

A Children's Introductory Yoga Course was conducted by BYMM children at the invitation of the Munger District Magistrate. Yoga classes were conducted by 115 Child Yoga Propagators and Instructors in 63 schools throughout the district from the 15th to 29th, giving 2,017 students basic training in yoga. From these, 500 were selected for more advanced training.

November

At the Sita Kalyanam celebration from 26th November to 4th December, the theme was 'Give, give, give, serve all, love all'. Good Luck Kits were assembled from gifts offered by devotees and distributed to young eligible brides. Sri Swamiji's satsangs and chanting of Ramacharitamanas inspired everyone daily. Swami Poonyananda, head of Niranjani Akhara, graced the occasion with his presence along with Swami Nikhilatmananda, head of the Ramakrishna Mission in Allahabad, and Swami Kankeshwarananda. Lalita Sharma sang, uplifting all present, and a Christian Mass was celebrated by Reverend Antoinette Schoenmaker of the Independent Church of Australia. The Lalita Yajna was conducted by tantric yoginis from Tamil Nadu. The wedding of Sita and Rama was performed symbolically on the final day when Sannyasi Nirliptachaitanya and Uma, a young couple from UK, were married by priests from Varanasi in the vedic style.



Swami Niranjana met the parents, teachers and 750 children who constituted the core group of BYMM at Ganga Darshan. He distributed certificates of appreciation to Bal Yoga Pracharakas (propagators), who were thereafter invited to conduct yoga classes all over the country.

During a seminar organized by Patna Yoga Mitra Mandal on the 8th and 9th, Swami Niranjana visited the Patna Sahib Gurudwara, offered his respects and addressed the gathering. Next he addressed a gathering of devotees at Panini Parisar. In the evening a program was organized at Bharatiya Nrityaleela Mandir. The Governor of Bihar, Dr A. Kidwai, was the chief guest. Also present were the Health Minister of the Government of Bihar, Sri Mahavir Prasad Yadav, Sri R.N.P. Sinha, retired Patna High Court Justice, and the ex-Vice-Chancellor of T.M. Bhagalpur University, Dr M.Q. Tauheed.

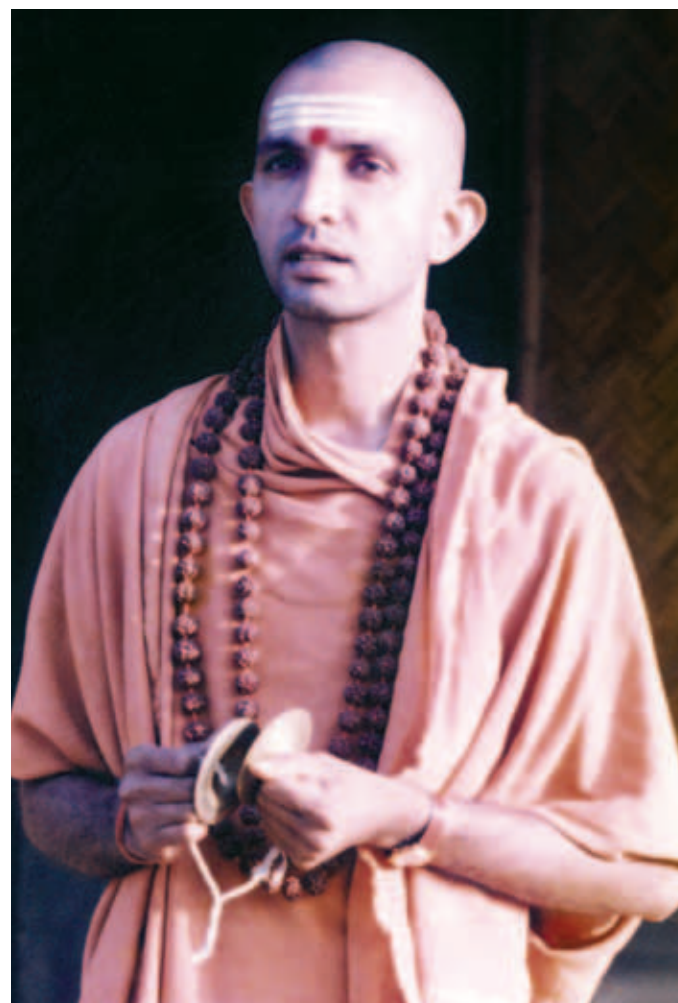
December

Swami Niranjana visited Nepal from the 18th to 21st at the invitation of Rotary International, accompanied by Swami Anandananda from Italy.



“Well, with all his travelling did you ever get to see Swami Niranjana this year?” asked my young friend mischievously.

“Yes, at Ganga Darshan, we were beginning to realize that the Swan isn’t bound by the lake,” I replied. “Still, I was lucky to be one of the team who went to Mumbai with Swamiji. The people are always so warm-hearted in their reception and the two



children from BYMM who came along, Ruchi Sinha and Saurabh, doing duty as big brother, had a great time. Ruchi had become a Pracharak, that’s someone trained to propagate yoga according to BYMM’s own meticulous accreditation process, and this led to a big adventure for her as she can tell us in her own words.

The Mumbai trip

“It was on 12th January 1997 when I got the big news: I was selected to go to Mumbai with Swamiji, just two of us from BYMM, me and Saurabh, and of course Vikas bhaiya. We started off on the 14th and reached there at 2 am the next day.

We didn’t meet Swamiji till that evening when satsang was held in a beautiful garden. For the first time we saw how people of a metropolitan city are also interested to hear Swamiji. And Swamiji was simply great in the way he spoke. From the next day we went to many places with Swamiji. Every evening, satsang was held at the JJ School of Art, which is one of the famous colleges of Mumbai, and not on any day was there a single seat empty. The words, the teachings, the kirtan made every evening vibrant.

We went to Bhabha Atomic Research Centre where Swamiji made them aware of the role of yoga in today’s life. Next day, early in the morning we went to a beautiful temple of Lord Vishnu situated on a hill. Many devotees came and the spiritual speech of Swamiji was flowing in the air all day long. In the evening we sat in the bus for Mumbai and the best thing was that Swamiji was with us on the bus. That three-hour journey was just the best I ever had.”

“And at Ganga Darshan,” I continued, “we now had Swami Kaivalyananda, a unique sannyasin with great experience, and a long-time friend and gurubhai of Swami Niranjana. Still, as BSY, BYB, the International Yoga Fellowship (IYF), Sivananda Math (SM) and other movements and organizations continued to grow it became clear that something had to change. Swami Niranjana once again took over the Presidency of BSY from Swami Gyanprakash, but was required to spend a great deal of time attending to the needs of disciples throughout India and

overseas. And yet his guidance was still essential for the training of new sannyasins at Ganga Darshan and for the work in Rikhia.”

“So Swami Kaivalyananda was recalled from Colombia to help with the work of BSY?”

“Yes, and he emerged like a gentle mountain. He’s not to be shaken, he treats everyone equally, and he does his sadhana every morning – even if on a train. As the mainstay of BSY administration, he faithfully carries out Swamiji’s instructions and manages things quietly in a kind-hearted way.”

This was a time when BYB was being hailed everywhere. At a four-day Yoga Satsanga Samaroha in Bhagalpur, Dr S.R. Sirkar, Vice Chancellor of T.M. Bhagalpur University, said it was an honour to give recognition to BYB as a Postgraduate Centre of Yogic Studies. This year also commemorated the 50th Sannyasa Jayanti of Sri Swamiji and the event was celebrated with an inspiring program at Ganga Darshan. BYMM continued to receive Swamiji’s special attention. On one occasion, he met the parents, teachers and 750 children who constituted the core group of BYMM.

At the same time, Swamiji continued to travel extensively in India and overseas. He visited Nepal this year, at the invitation of Rotary International and was accompanied on his trip by Swami Anandananda from Italy. At the inaugural session of the program, Swamiji addressed over 1,500 guests and delegates, and was widely celebrated by Nepal’s television and press.

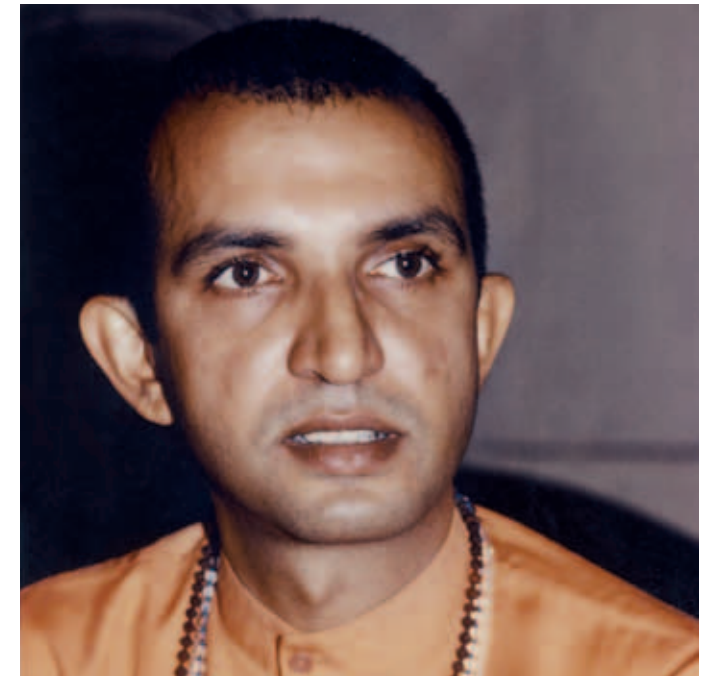
In Europe, Slovenia was one of the countries he visited for the first time, and created a stir there. Since then, the Slovenians have poured out their love and respect for Swamiji and the Satyananda Yoga tradition, so much so that eleven years later in 2008 we would see them name three stars on the three luminaries of the tradition. Let us ask Swami Vishwashakti, acharya of the Tara Yoga Centre there, how Swamiji conquered her country.

My brightest star in the sky

“Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati is a pure form of the highest consciousness and energy, this is what I used to say to our people in Slovenia. For me he represents that state of consciousness and energy. When you meet Swamiji, you just feel that you are

having the darshan of a self-realized person. You can feel the vibration of that great consciousness and energy. I remember an incident when someone I know to be very firmly grounded, strong and realistic, met Swamiji for the first time, he had tears in his eyes. He could not speak a word and just cried. This happens when you come near a great soul. Today he is deeply devoted to Swamiji.

Swamiji definitely changes people and these changes come about very spontaneously. When I received diksha from Swamiji



he gave me my name Vishwashakti. I had my eyes closed and the very moment he told me the name, I had a vision and heard a sound. I opened my eyes and looked at him with a question in my eyes. He simply said, ‘It was Shakti.’ He just knew that in that very moment I had had the vision and heard the sound.

This is the way Swamiji communicates with us. If you look at his eyes he just knows your question and gives you the answer before you can formulate the words. I’ve always been fascinated by how Swamiji explains difficult subjects in a very easy and understandable language. It is as if he has all the knowledge absorbed in him. We have to only listen to him carefully.

My relation with Swamiji is somewhat complex. First of all he is my most respectful Guruji, my supreme god. I have no other god or goddess; they are all embodied in him. He is my teacher in all aspects of my life, my most beloved brother, my closest friend, my adviser, doctor and psychiatrist, and I know that his is a shoulder I can always cry on. Swamiji is magical. If

only we open our hearts his miracles will be experienced. I am the witness of one such event. I have always received everything which I wished to have from Swamiji, so I never asked him for anything. Once I thought how nice it would be if I received a very special picture of Swamiji – which I'd seen somewhere – for my altar at home. I did not tell this to anybody. That year when I was in Ganga Darshan after Sita Kalyanam, I received as Swamiji's prasad that very picture!

I am lucky to have such a close subtle communication with Swamiji. During my meditations I have often received his command and answers to all my questions. As the acharya of Satyananda Yoga in Slovenia I lead the Tara Yoga Center and almost all classes of yoga in as well as out of the centre. Sometimes I have no time to prepare for my class and I just pray to my guru, 'Swamiji, help me.' Those are the days I do my class in the most beautiful way.

When Swamiji visited Slovenia for the first time in 1997, he had his public lecture in our cultural centre which is the largest in Slovenia, and it was fully booked. During his lecture there was a very special atmosphere, the audience was listening with open hearts and tears in eyes. After the lecture they all said that there was something magical in the hall and all felt the vibration of a peaceful energy. From that time Swamiji opened the hearts of Slovenians. Swamiji likes Slovenia and Slovenians like him!

Five years ago Swamiji told me to make yoga recognized and legalized at the government level in Slovenia. Knowing the conservatism of the government, I thought it would be an impossible task. But Swamiji made the impossible possible, and today, yoga is recognized by the Ministry of Health in Slovenia.

I think I must've had some good karmas from my previous life which let me find Swamiji as my guru in this life. For all the knowledge that I receive from my Guruji I thank him from the bottom of my heart."

Another person who was spellbound by the charisma of realized souls when she arrived in India this year was Swami Kamalavidya. What she received she translated into her

effort at spreading the yoga movement in South Africa. Here she is, on her first impressions.

A perfect surprise

"They say that first impressions count and if they are strong and convincing, can even change your life. Such a rare occasion presented itself in 1997. I flew from South Africa to India working my way by motor rikshaw to a remote village called Rikhia, known



today as Rikhiapeeth. I participated in a very ancient vedic ritual known as Rajasooya Yajna. It was hosted by the honourable and enlightened Swami Satyananda Saraswati accompanied by his successor Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati. The fire ceremony held in the yajnasala was well orchestrated into its second successful year of the 12-year period allotted for this yajna. Little

did I know then that I would be attending the celebrations each year until its completion! Rubbing shoulders with the thousands of international, national and local villagers was quite intriguing as we greeted each other with 'Namo Narayana' and kept very busy with our seva duties.

There is a kirtan sung at the ashram, 'Knocking on Satyam's Door'. My first encounter on meeting Swami Niranjan was that I had knocked on the ashram doors and was warmly received. Swamiji is so natural, with movements as graceful and fluid as a swan on water. I learned so much just by observing and watching him interacting – be it a small gathering or a swelling of the masses, he is riveted in the moment, giving one hundred percent to the task at hand.

I was especially moved and touched by his impeccable manners of respect and unswerving service to his guru, with attention to detail that he is so well known for. There are so many memorable moments being with Swamiji... I remember one in particular when in 1999–2000 I was doing the Certificate Course. I was ascending the ashram steps making my way towards the lecture room when unexpectedly Swamiji appeared descending the steps and our paths crossed. I spontaneously greeted him with 'Hari Om Swamiji, what a lovely surprise!' Swamiji's response was a question and not an answer, 'Why is it a surprise?' My immediate reply was, 'It just is so perfect!' and we both moved on to our respective duties. Speaking silently to myself as I walked along I said, 'Swamiji, you are full of unexpected surprises. Here I am under your auspices experiencing gurukul life, which is enabling me to confront my adversities outside and within. Then I have to come to terms with my emotions in making the right choices to control my life and accept myself. And you know all this and more.' This brings me to Swamiji's thoughtfully devised 'SWAN' theory which is about your strengths-weaknesses-ambitions-needs, and which was my lifeline enabling me to understand my dharma. It was invaluable in helping me act out my role in life and playing it well. Yes, Swamiji, what a generous gift it is! Through your grace and love, I am able to move forward with faith and strength."

Total Wellbeing

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

How can we experience complete wellness or total wellbeing, this is a question asked by aspirants often. The answer is that whether our concept of wellbeing is physical, social, personal or global, we have to look at three components. First is the quality of mind which makes us connect, enjoy and participate creatively in the world. The same mind can take us in the other direction where we are frustrated, depressed, unconcerned and self-centred. To deal with the mind, a basic understanding or philosophy of life has to be developed first. We need to have an understanding of life an awareness of life, and a philosophy of life. The idea of wellness begins from this point onwards. The philosophy of life we adhere to indicates the future behaviour of the mind and our progression in life. This philosophy is not a belief system or a religious philosophy, but something more practical and concrete by which we can experience the tranquillity, joy and peace within. So the first component of wellbeing is having a good philosophy of life.

The second component is modifying the lifestyle. Until we make an effort to change our environment, our conditionings, behaviours and habits, wellbeing cannot be experienced. Fine-tuning the lifestyle is necessary in order to experience total wellbeing.

The third component is modifying our daily routine so that we are not accumulating stresses and tensions, confusions and conflicts, not cramming ourselves with ideas and beliefs which confuse us, but are able to progress through our daily routine in a gentle, systematic, relaxed way. So the process of acquiring wellbeing constitutes mind management with a philosophy, lifestyle management and routine management.

Do you have a philosophy in life? Some people will say yes, some will say no. The problem is that for most people philosophy remains philosophy and does not become a

practice, because it is conditioned. The practical aspect of philosophy is more important than the theory. By philosophy I do not mean ideas of God and creation, universe, existence and soul, but an understanding of the evolutionary process



of life. We are all going through a process of evolution. From birth till death we are evolving. The body is evolving from birth; every cell and organ, even the bones, are growing, developing and maturing. The hair has evolved from black to white. The eyesight has evolved and now we use glasses. The teeth have evolved and we use dentures. Physically, we are always undergoing a process of change and transformation.

Similarly, we progress, evolve and mature, mentally and emotionally.

Something that aids the process of maturity is spiritual life. Spirituality means connecting with what is auspicious, appropriate and good, connecting with one's own inner source of strength. Spiritual discipline has shown a way to improve the human personality. The first two branches of ashtanga yoga are yama and niyama, which represent spiritual philosophy, identification with positive traits, a positive conditioning of the mind. Yama is the first stage of yoga in the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali. When you read these sutras do not try to analyze their interpretation. Try to understand their practical applications.

There are five yamas: *satya*, truth, *ahimsa*, non-violence, *asteya*, honesty, *aparigraha*, non-possessiveness, and *brahmacharya*, being established in higher consciousness, which rectify the behaviour of the human personality and nature. Truth is not a word; it is a state of consciousness. Truth is being sincere, not false. Life is full of falseness and manipulation. Even the so-called spiritually enlightened people crave power and manipulation. They have never looked into the yamas and niyamas, but believe that meditation is the first and foremost practice. Common sense says that if Patanjali had wanted meditation to be first, he would have placed it first, not in the seventh stage, and the yamas might come at the end. The so-called exponents of yoga today manipulate the system of yoga and do not see the relevance of the sequence defined in the tradition for the improvement of life.

If you are a sincere seeker, then you have to start your journey with the first step, which is developing the right philosophy for your growth and progress in life. The five yamas constitute yogic philosophy, and this philosophy begins with association with *satya*, truth. Realizing one's associations and connections is the first step. Are your associations positive,

truthful and uplifting? Or are they destructive, detrimental and depressive? This point has to be understood very carefully. Do not link the idea of association with your marital life, partner or any other person. From the yogic perspective we need to associate with those people who can inspire and encourage us to face life with dignity, who can help us to follow a system through which we can realize the beauty that life

change the rotten apple. That is the power of negativity and conditioning.

We have to watch out for this in our associations. You can remove the rotten apple from the basket, but are you able to remove a rotten influence or association from your life? If you can, you are well on the path of wellbeing, but if you cannot,



has to offer. A positive association cultivates a positive mind. When you are surrounded by good people, you feel good and when you are surrounded by negative people, your own thoughts, expressions and attitudes become negative. One rotten apple has the capacity to destroy all the other apples in the basket, but the hundred good apples in the basket cannot

then do not think about wellbeing, because there is no middle path, no adjustment here. Either something is rotten, or fresh and pure. Therefore, spiritual discipline requires you to be constantly aware of those influences, people and situations where you are restricted and of those places and conditions where you are able to express yourself and grow. In Sanskrit,

this is known as satsang. *Sanga* means association, coming together. *Sat* means realizing the true, actual nature. One who realizes one's own truthful nature and associates with those who are truthful is a *satsangi*, one who is involved in the process of truthful association. Satsang does not mean lectures and discussions. Associating with a truthful nature is *satsang*. We have to incorporate this into our life by deciding who our friends and associates will be. Most of our decisions are not mature, but based on our likes, dislikes, ambitions and needs. If we are dissatisfied with our life, then we need to make changes. We need to take responsibility for our own health, happiness and prosperity.

I do not see involvement with yoga and spirituality as passing time. I do not see this as a gathering of members of a community or a group. I see people involved with yoga in a different manner. Yogis are people who are trying to improve their associations and qualities. You can practise postures in front of a mirror, but that is not yoga. Yoga is taking responsibility for yourself. Postures, meditation, kundalini or kriya yoga do not represent yoga; they are systems and practices belonging to a group called yoga. It is your conviction, your motivation to change and bring the beauty of the universe into your life which is the aspiration of yoga. Therefore, the first aspect of wellbeing is having the right kind of philosophy of life.

We imbibe the right kind of philosophy by first defining, realizing and knowing with whom we associate. Because of our mental conditioning, it is easier to associate with the negative and destructive. School children are guided by their friends to experiment with things like smoking and drinking behind their parents' backs. Why are they so easily influenced by their friends? Why can't children relate to their parents instead of fearing them? Because of association. You can sit your child on your lap twenty times a day, but that is not association, because when the time comes, the child will hide the true intention of his life from you.

What has gone wrong? Parents have become the children's judge, jury and executioner. They have lost the ability to associate in a friendly manner with their own children and with others. We do not know who our neighbours are. We live in isolated worlds. It is a trend that is evolving and gaining in strength. It seems that the quest for material happiness isolates individuals and the quest for spiritual experiences unites people. Therefore, there has to be a balance between the material and the spiritual. Do not negate one because of the other. Bring them together and start your yoga by defining your associations.

The second component of cultivating wellbeing is observing and modifying one's attitudes and always trying to maintain an optimistic, positive attitude. If the attitudes are negative, there is no inner, mental clarity; the mind goes into a dark space and the world looks grey and glum. Positivity has to be maintained in every situation, knowing that it too will pass. We identify with suffering because it seems to be greater and happiness is like a sprinkle of salt on top of the vegetables. Never try to have fifty percent sorrow and fifty percent happiness; it is a big imbalance. Ninety percent sorrow and ten percent happiness is a good combination. Look at your own expressions, attitudes and mentality in this way. Start with ten percent optimism and positivity, and you will begin to love it, and in the course of time it will multiply and increase until the time comes when you are fully stable in that positive, optimistic attitude.

So searching for the right associations is a philosophy of life. Developing the right attitude is a philosophy of life because it is something practical you can experience and feel in your own self. I do not believe in the philosophy which says "Love everyone and be compassionate to all." How can one talk of love and compassion or God and the transcendental without having purified the mind, behaviour and character? A classic example is of yoga practitioners who practise meditation for 30, 40 or 50 years, but are unable to deal with or confront the dissipated nature of their own mind. They cannot manage their own jealousy and envy, yet they claim that they meditate for so many

hours a day. People dupe themselves because they are unable to realize that the basic structure has to be rectified first.

The first stage is association, the second is a positive and optimistic attitude and the third is cultivating humility. Humility is absence of arrogance and ego. Humility is balanced self-esteem, a positive self-image that one cultivates and connects with the softer sentiments and emotions. Cultivating Humility is the



sattvic quality of mind whereas arrogance is the tamasic quality. So there are three important components: associations, a positive disposition and humility. If you have them as your personal philosophy, then you are very much on the path of wellbeing.

Contentment, peace and joy are natural outcomes of living this philosophy. You do not have to acquire them.

When you drink water, your thirst is quenched. All you have to do is drink the water. You do not have to keep saying to yourself, "My thirst is being quenched." You have to live these three principles in the same manner. Contentment, peace and joy are the results of living a balanced, harmonious life. Remember that wellbeing will not come by practising hatha yoga; that is only physical wellbeing. Wellbeing will not

come by practising raja yoga; that is only mental wellbeing. Emotional wellbeing cannot be attempted through bhakti yoga and intellectual satisfaction will not be acquired through jnana yoga. It will all happen once you are able to live these philosophies of humility, positivity and right association. ॐ



January

Swami Hrishikeshananda conducted an eye camp for indigent residents of Mangala village and the leper colony.

From the 12th to 17th, classes in Bhagavad Gita chanting and pranayama were conducted for child yoga instructors by Swamis Swayambhunath and Padmapad at Sivananda Ashram.

BYMM selected 231 students from more than 30 schools to be trained as child yoga demonstrators at Sivananda Ashram.

From the 18th to 24th, a program was held at the Atmadarshan Centre, Patna, for priests and nuns by Swami Sumitrananda.

On the 25th, Swami Niranjana presided at the Golden Jubilee celebration of Balika Vidyapeeth, Lakhisarai.

Dr Sannyasi Mangalteertham and Swami Yogakanti conducted a stress management seminar for the Indian Oil Management Institute, Haldia, from the 27th to 30th.

February

During Basant Panchami celebrations Swami

Niranjana conducted early morning havan and satsang.

From the 2nd to 9th, a yoga program and a retreat at Matheran hill station was conducted for Satyananda Yoga Centre, Mumbai, by Swami Sanyam.

Ajmer Yoga Mitra Mandal conducted an orientation program as part of a Career Transition Course for IOC general managers and directors from the 17th to 20th at IOC's Institute of Petroleum Management, New Delhi, and a yoga seminar organized by SPIC-MACAY as part of Virasat-98 at IIT, New Delhi, from the 17th to 21st.

March

Swami Shivaraj conducted a yoga nidra session on the 2nd at the Central Yoga Research Institute (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare), New Delhi; a yoga shivir from the 9th to 13th under

the auspices of the Milk City Junior Chamber in Anand, Gujarat; and a yoga shivir from the 26th March to 6th April in the Agrawal Panchayat Bhavan at Mount Abu, Rajasthan.

Swami Atmabhishek conducted an introductory yoga program at Saraswati Shishu Mandir, Loni, UP, from the 6th to 8th, and a yoga seminar at ACC Lakheri Cement Works Gymkhana, Lakheri, from the 22nd to 29th.

April

During a one-week visit to Australia, Swami Niranjana gave guidance to students participating in the Sannyasa Training Course at Mangrove Mountain.

HMCs were conducted at Sivananda Ashram, Munger, from the 5th to 20th by Swami Swayambhunath for diabetes, endocrinal diseases, thyroid disease, menstrual disorders,



obesity, rheumatism, arthritis, spinal problems and high blood pressure.

Swami Hrishikeshananda conducted yoga classes at NTPC, Korba, from 7th April to 6th May.

Niranjanananda Yoga Shiksha Kendra, Saharsa, organized a program conducted by Sannyasi Nityachaitanya from the 25th April to 2nd May. Swami Niranjan gave satsang at the closing ceremony.

May

Swami Niranjan conducted a program in Mumbai from 28th May to 2nd June, arranged by the Satyananda Yoga Centre, Mumbai.

June

The Yoga Research Foundation (YRF), Munger, and BYB jointly conducted four diabetes camps: at Satya Darshan Yogashram, Raipur, from 31st May to 14th June with Dr Sannyasi Paripurnananda; at Ganga Darshan from the 5th to 20th with Sannyasi Nityachaitanya; at Satyananda Ashram, Rajnandgaon, from the 14th to 28th with Dr Sannyasi Mangalteertham and Swami Sambuddhananda; and at Bhubaneshwar Ashram from 21st June to 5th July with Dr Sannyasi Harikripa.

Swamis Vigyanachaitanya and Padmapad conducted a yoga camp at Muzaffarpur from the 7th to 14th, organized by the Rotary Club.

Swami Yogavijay and Dr Swami Nirmalananda conducted a camp in Kathmandu from the 8th to 12th, organized by Sannyasi Sivalingam, President of Yoga Sadhana Niketan, with the assistance of Jignasu Alakhshakti from the Shakti Yoga Healing Centre.

In Jabalpur, from the 10th to 30th, yoga classes organized by the Madhya Pradesh chapter of IPTA were conducted by teachers from the Satyananda Yoga Kendra.

BYMM organized a yoga course at the Polo Ground, Munger, from the 11th to 14th, in which 4,000 children participated.

A tour of South Korea was organized by Dr J.H. Moon for Swami Shankarananda and Dr Rishi Vivekananda, as representatives of BYB, from the 15th June to 3rd July. In Kyungsang University at

Jinju, Pusan National University, Cheju National University, Daegu University and the J.H. Moon Yoga Research Centre, seminars were conducted for university teachers, student counsellors and selected postgraduate students.

Swami Satyadharma travelled in Australia from 18th June to 20th July, visiting Mangrove Mountain, Gosford, Manly and Rocklyn.

July

Swami Niranjan installed a statue of Paramguru Swami Sivananda in Jyoti Mandir, Ganga Darshan. The sthapana ceremony was performed by Swami Vidyamba and two yogini disciples from Lalita Mahila Samajam Ashram, Thirueengomalai, Tamil Nadu, on 14th July, the Mahasamadhi day of Swami Sivananda.

Swamiji led thousands of devotees in chanting Guru Stotram,



Satguru Vandana and Saundarya Lahari, bhajans and kirtans during Guru Poornima.

During Guru Poornima celebrations in Rajnandgaon, six tricycle wheelchairs were given to disabled people.

A yoga camp for was conducted at Katihar from the 14th to 21st by Sannyasi Nityachaitanya.

The Patna branch of IYFM conducted yoga programs for State Bank of India officers in July and August. Yoga training was also given in Ganpur village from 26th July to 30th August.

August

Sannyasi Yogashikshananda and Satyananda Yoga Kendra, Gwalior, MP, conducted yoga classes from the 1st to 31st; a 15-day program on 'Yogic Management of Asthma'; a 15-day summer camp for students, and yoga classes in two primary and middle schools.

Inspired by Swami Satyananda, Jhoolan Utsav, Festival of Swings, was organized for the village people of Rikhia from the 4th to 8th. The villagers were mesmerized by this royal enactment of a past event preserved by Indian mythology, tradition and religion. Their whole beings radiated feelings from awe to humility to surrender as they communed with the Lord.

On the 24th, Swami Niranjan was chief guest at the closing ceremony of a yoga training camp organized by the Bihar Military Police for members of 18 companies. The ceremony was presided over by Sri Baljeet Singh, IPS.

Yoga Mitra Mandal, Gondia, conducted a yoga camp from 25th August to 1st September.

Swami Yogaratna conducted a yoga program for IOC in Rajkot and Gandhidan, Gujarat, from 14th August to 7th September.

September

From the 5th to 17th, BYMM Child Yoga Propagators taught 1,400 children in 33 schools, 400 of whom were selected for advanced training.

Swami Devshankarananda from Gyandarshan Yoga Ashram, Bhilai, inaugurated Satyananda Yoga Kendra, Gondia, Maharashtra, on the 8th, the birthday of Paramguru Swami Sivananda.

From the 8th to the 12th, for the 4th Foundation Day of BYB, Dr Shailendra Nath Srivastava, Vice-Chancellor of Bhagalpur University, and Dr M.Q. Tauheed, ex-Vice-Chancellor of Bhagalpur and Mithila Universities, were guests at Ganga Darshan.

Pandits Vanshidhar, G.C. Pathak and Balaram Das Mishra commemorated the 51st sannyasa birthday of Swami Satyananda with a musical evening of devotional songs organized by the Yoga Mitra Mandal.

October

BYB commenced a Certificate Course in Yogic Studies for participants from Ireland, Greece, Australia, Bulgaria, Colombia, England, Belgium, Iran, Sweden, USA, Argentina, Italy, Nepal, Germany, Spain and India.

Yoga programs were conducted in Patna for cadets and NCC (Navy) staff from Motihari, Ranchi, Ramgarhwa, Netarhat and Patna.

A National Yoga Convention was conducted at Satyananda Yogashram, Bhubaneshwar, from the 8th to 11th.

Swami Vigyanachaitanya and Sannyasi Tapogyanam conducted yoga programs in the corporate/industrial world of Hyderabad from the 18th to 27th, including a yoga camp for senior managers and workers, programs in the Faridabad factory, a lecture at the Confederation of Indian Industry, lectures for doctors and nurses at ESI Hospital and at Hyderabad Industries Ltd, and a program at the Administrative Staff College of India. They also met with the Director and cancer specialists of the Apollo group of hospitals to explore the feasibility of a joint research project on cancer therapy.

A Yoga Sadhana Training Camp was conducted at Satyananda Yoga Kendra, Gondia, from the 24th to 30th by Satyadarshan Yoga Ashram, Raipur.

On the 25th, Dr Sannyasi Yogasindhu addressed the fourth National Conference of the Psycholinguistic Association of India at Meerut, UP.

A two-week program was conducted for NTPC employees



at Auraia, UP, from the 26th by Swami Atmabhishek and Dr Sannyasi Yogasindhu. A follow-up yoga seminar was held by Swami Atmabhishek from 30th November to 12th December.

November

Sita Kalyanam was celebrated from the 16th to 24th. Each day the program began before dawn at Harlajori temple, two kilometres from the Alakh Bara, where kirtans and bhajans were sung. At the Alakh Bara, discourses with simple and sincere presentations from different faiths in an atmosphere of harmony and acceptance were given. On the final day, the royal wedding ceremony of Lord Rama and Sita was enacted. Swami Satyananda sang, 'Sita Ram Manohar Jori, Dasharath Nandan Janak Dulari' and announced the opening of Amrit Kalash, the new clinic, which will give free high quality medical treatment to Sri Swamiji's neighbours in the surrounding village, which embodies his message of serve, love, give and be compassionate to others.





Swami Gorakhnath from Shanti Darshan Yoga Ashram, Bokaro, conducted a program for children from 24th December to 1st January.



This was a year when BYMM truly spread its wings. The child yoga propagators of BYMM conducted yoga classes all over the country. The BYMM annual report stated that in 1998 BYMM imparted yogic training to more than 15,400 children while in the last three years they had visited 244 schools in Bihar and other states, and taught yoga to 32,500 children.

BYMM's teaching group began weekly chanting and karate classes, oral English classes, painting classes and Ramayana classes. On their anniversary day in October, Swami Shankarananda congratulated the children on their 'silent revolution' and Swami Niranjana expressed his confidence in the children of Munger as harbingers of the yogic vision.

It was as if there was a tremendous explosion of energy as the children of Munger responded to the inspiration of Swami Niranjana's call to take up yoga. It is, in fact, thrilling to watch the enthusiasm, dedication and self-discipline these children employ both in the practice and propagation of yoga.

The children run their own training courses and exams as they gain more experience and knowledge of yoga and teaching, and exhibit great composure, creativity and self-discipline. Brajbhushan Mishra has been through the training and experience of BYMM, and although he is a grown-up now, he acknowledges the benefits and contributes whenever he can. As you can see from his story.

Swamiji through the eyes of children

"People say that they have seen God, but I have seen our revered Swami Niranjana who has always been a guiding light for children like us, constantly urging us in new directions. I

Yoga training in jails was organized at the request of the Inspector General of Prisons, Government of Bihar. It was conducted from 23rd November to 14th December by BYB postgraduate students and BSY sannyasins. A total of 850 male and 32 female prisoners received yoga training in 8 central and 12 district jails. Swamis Nirmalananda, Nityachaitanya and Prahladananda conducted the programs with Sannyasis Yogapremananda, Satyapragyananda, Atmaswaroopananda, Govindacharya, Yogendramurti, Shashwatachaitanya, Mantrabindu, Jignasus Yogachandra, Sudarshan, Swaroopmurti, Manomaya, Shastragyanam, Harigyanam and Karmarath with Siddhartha Bhushan, Rishi Kumar Jha, Somlata Jha and Pratishtha Kumar Singh.

December

A Prana Vidya Course was conducted at Ganga Darshan from the 1st to 7th by Swamis Satyadharma and Sumitrananda. BYMM propagators conducted a program at St Joseph's School, Ghatsila, from the 21st to 23rd.





remember distinctly that when I saw Swamiji for the first time at a yoga program in 1990, I could not take my eyes off him, and hung on his every word – I could not see or hear anything other than him.

Today I am surprised to find myself a yoga teacher, I can't believe it. When I teach yoga to some child, I feel very good that I have become what I am today, and Swamiji showed me the way. In 1996, I participated as a student in a children's yoga course. It influenced me in a profound way. I made yoga a fundamental part of my life from then on, on the basis of a sankalpa.

I slowly started progressing by incorporating yoga in my daily life. In the process of moving forward, I learnt a lot and kept inspiring or motivating myself to keep going in the right direction. From 1997 to 2002, Swamiji sent me to teach yoga in cities like Delhi, Bilaspur, Indore and Lakhisarai, and I felt very proud on all these occasions. Today, due to yoga, I have a great advantage and the opportunity to continuously improve myself

in this hobby that I have been passionate about since childhood – music. After yoga became an integral and fundamental part of my life, I was able to make a lot of progress with my music.

Swamiji is the source of inspiration, and without that, not even one child can progress in life. Swamiji is fluent in many languages, knows karate, driving, flying, riding, the Bhagavad Gita and the scriptures, sciences, maths, music, painting, and he has many other talents. And it is impossible for an ordinary human being to be so multi-talented, so skilled in so many areas – only Superbeings have this amazing capacity. And our Swamiji is such a person."

Swami Niranjana was himself a bal yogi – a yogi as a child – and has always shown a particular understanding and concern for the welfare of children. More than that, he has retained so much of the innocence, openness and simple acceptance that distinguishes children, even while he deals with the cosmopolitan elite of the world. When confronted with the vagaries of human nature, the difficulties of establishing and

maintaining large institutions, and uniting the efforts of people from countries with vastly different traditions, cultures and perceptions, one sees in him the freshness of a child.

It is not possible for the ordinary seeker to understand and evaluate the life and actions of a great soul. However, the inner light that Swami Niranjana glows with and the compassion and simple kindness which flow constantly from his gentle and forgiving nature are reminiscent of his paramguru, Swami Sivananda. For, like Swami Sivananda, he possesses that inner joy and childlike innocence which opens spontaneously to each and every one of life's passing scenes and situations. And then, he shares more than just a few similarities with the famous child sannyasin and sage Shankaracharya . . .

If only we could attain or regain the beautiful humbleness of a child, what else would be needed? Swamiji's gurubhai and fellow prankster, Swami Gorakhnath, is yet another veteran

fortunate enough to have met his guru when very young. For all these bal yogis, as the disciple matures, the ability to surrender the ego becomes deeper till there is a wisdom of innocence. This was captured in the words of Swami Gorakhnath one evening when he told us about how he came to yoga.

Everything is secondary to surrender

"I still feel that my sannyasa training course is going on. When I came to Munger in 1970, the three-year sannyasa course was about to commence, but I did not know what it was all about. I had only come to see Swami Satyananda.

I first had Sri Swamiji's darshan at the World Yoga Convention held at Raigarh in 1968. At that time I had no idea what a mahatma or satsang was. I was there because a couple of us young boys had the bright idea of opening a stall to look after the shoes that people reverentially took off

before entering the program venue. As we kept on with our enterprise, I suddenly thought, 'Let me see what is happening inside the convention hall.' Although I do not recall what Sri Swamiji said, whatever it was left a deep impression. His voice penetrated right inside me.

After the program, I followed Sri Swamiji to his place of residence. I managed to meet him and simply stated, 'Swamiji, I want to go with you.' He asked me what I was studying. When I answered, he said, 'All right, first complete your studies.' He did not take me with him. It seemed to me as if a strong force was pulling me towards him. I stopped going to school after that and started making preparations to go to Munger.

When people come to the ashram for the first time, they are put to test. I was not spared either. Every sannyasin would ask me to work with him and not go anywhere else.

Swami Niranjan was a child then and he would always be seen with either the Bhagavad Gita or an Upanishad in his hand. I would peep into his book, but everything was in Sanskrit and I did not know the language. However, he would invite me to sit beside him. Once he read out the first sloka of the Gita, chapter 15, to me. It took me one month to memorize that sloka! I had come to the ashram with half pants, half a shirt and half a mind.

Then the three-year sannyasa course started in which 108 people from all over the world participated. Sri Swamiji conducted all the classes. In the beginning I was afraid of him, but slowly I became like a child in his father's presence, free and fearless. The sense of intimacy and his love towards us at that time are indescribable.

Sri Swamiji would wake us up at any time, sometimes even at midnight! Nobody had a watch and we did not know what time it was. One day I got into trouble. He woke us up at perhaps



one am. Swami Niranjan and I were feeling sleepy, so we lay down in shashankasana beneath Sri Swamiji's stage cot in the sadhana hall. A bedspread hung over its edges so nobody could see us. After some time, Sri Swamiji came for the class and sat down on the cot. Immediately we woke up but we dared not do a thing; we were stuck under the cot! We pushed at each other, indicating in sign language that if we emerged he would know what we were up to.

Sri Swamiji started to teach the class. Three or four hours passed. We were getting cramps because we couldn't move or change our position. We rolled in shashankasana from one side to the other. After class, Sri Swamiji went back to his room and everyone else went for tea. The moment they left, we emerged and followed them, but one sannyasin saw us and said, 'Look, these two have finally appeared!' I got very angry. When that sannyasin asked me where I had been, I told him to keep his mouth shut and keep walking. But somebody went and sneaked us. Sri Swamiji called us and asked, 'Where were you two?' Swami Niranjan and I looked at each other. Who was going to answer?

Sri Swamiji was very strict but at the same time he was very soft inside. This I have experienced many times. Perhaps it is because of this that I have been able to stay close to him all these years. He used to discipline us, but the next moment he would call us and talk as if nothing had happened. He would even let us play and eat with him whenever he found time.

Now a word about karma yoga. Before I came to the ashram, I had learnt some meditation, so whenever possible I would sit quietly for an hour or so. But the moment I was attempting this, Sri Swamiji would summon me. It invariably happened every time I assumed the lotus pose. The first time I thought 'Oh, he has some work.' The second time also I gave him the benefit of the doubt. But the third time, I knew that his intentions were different. I tried to dodge him and would escape into the bathroom to meditate, but he would send a messenger there also to knock on the door! Finally I realized that the guru actually knows everything, his consciousness is all-pervasive.

Whenever Sri Swamiji was around a karma yoga area, and most of the time he was in those early days, all the swamis would feel a surge, an awakening of some kind of energy which would take them through their task. The task no longer seemed hard. In the presence of Sri Swamiji, nothing appeared difficult or unattainable. He would never give instructions like, 'Go and do this.' Instead, he would organize the karma yoga in such a manner that nobody would feel the load of the task. He would himself join in and sing kirtan or tell jokes. There was always an atmosphere of lightness around him. Now I can understand why all these techniques are adopted by the gurus. Why they force



someone to clean the dirtiest spot in the ashram, why someone who is innocent of an error gets the punishment, why one has to do something one doesn't want to do. It is because it is necessary to exhaust one's karmas. And when I realized this, I was grateful to my guru.

Once it so happened that Swami Niranjan and I were together. As usual he had a book of some sort with him. From a distance, Sri Swamiji was watching us, suddenly Swami Niranjan noticed him and became quiet (we were supposed to be on mouna), seemingly engrossed in his book. I was left

talking, as I had not noticed Sri Swamiji watching us. I missed my food for that day! I used to be in the trouble spot most of the time. I would get jealous of Swami Niranjan, but I knew that he had some special grace and that I should also learn from him. After accepting this, the feeling of jealousy left me and we became very good friends. This friendship that I share with him is beyond words. Sometimes I forget that he is now Paramacharya and I have to behave accordingly!"

Among Swamiji's landmark programs this year was the one held in Mumbai in May-June. The foundation he had been building on in this cosmopolitan city over the years appeared to have made a formidable impact and at all the locations that he gave talks, the halls were spilling over.

Another significant event was the National Yoga Convention conducted at Satyananda Yogashram in Bhubaneswar in which the Chief Minister of Orissa, J.B. Patnaik, addressed the gathering.

Back in Munger, BYB commenced three Postgraduate Courses and a one-year Undergraduate Diploma Course in Yogic Studies. The various Departments became active and began accepting students. However, despite all the contemporization, the connection with an ancient tradition always remained well and alive. When Swamiji conducted a midnight prana pratishtha ceremony of the most formidable of tantric goddesses, Ma Rakta Kali, at a program in Saharsa, this was more than evident.

In fact, the ashram resonates with the presence of cosmic forces. Once, a first-time visitor to the ashram related this little incident to me.

At the nucleus

"I had met Swami Niranjan at a yoga convention and he had asked me to visit Ganga Darshan. So I came, without any preconceived notions, but only to experience the beauty of this beautiful being who had beckoned me. And of course I was bowled over by Swamiji's graciousness and generosity during my stay, almost puzzled at how he could possibly think that a person so much lower on the evolution

scale deserved so much of his attention. When I mentioned this to him, he simply stated, 'It would be arrogance on my part if I thought I couldn't ask you to join me for a meal.'

Next day he took me with him as he walked around the ashram grounds. There was a strange feeling of being on a trail of discovery. I could sense a special energy pervading the place, but there was also a nagging sensation – I couldn't locate its source! Then we walked into the akhara, inside Sri Peeth. And my knees almost gave way. It felt as if I had travelled right into the heart of the force that was throbbing in the ashram. I could neither speak nor offer obeisance. 'This is the place of my sadhana,' Swamiji was saying, the words seeming to reach me from some place very far away. 'The Cosmic Mother is worshipped here.' After a few moments of this 2000-KV encounter, Swamiji led us out to the Tulasi altar. As we stood there and Swamiji explained the significance of the akhara, I suddenly looked down, only to find an orange-coloured snake crawl past my feet like a flash of lightning and disappear behind the Tulasi.

'That,' I said shakenly, 'was a snake that almost went over my feet.'

'Yes, there are a few here,' Swamiji replied nonchalantly."

Shakti is alive at Ganga Darshan now as She was hundreds of years ago when Maharaja Karna invoked her. Someone whose name reflects this force, Swami Matrikananda, is another person with courage. Hailing from the mountains in Wales, she plunged into sannyasa life without preliminaries. This is how she remembers Ganga Darshan.

The art of living

"When I first came to Munger in 1987, the main building was still having the finishing touches added to it. Long, square chunks of wood ran down the length of the stairs and men with chisels worked away at carving them into banisters. There were few trees except for the ashokas, and they were very short. Much karma yoga time was spent picking stones from bare soil where the akhara now stands.

When I met Sri Swamiji for the first time, I was struck by how very unimposing he was. He seemed like a charming and gentle man, reminding me rather of my grandfather. (When I told my group leader this, he nearly choked on his ashram tea!) He wore simple clothes and lacked any ostentatious expressions of power, wealth or status. I really did not know what to make of him.

During my stay I did the ten-day Kriya Course (my excuse for coming to India) at the end of which I took karma sannyasa, my



first initiation. A few weeks later I took poorna sannyasa and after that I did the one-month teacher training course. I had been a yoga student in Australia for 18 months at that stage. Did I know what I was letting myself in for? No. But I had an instinct that it was the right thing for me to do and, surprisingly, it really was.

During that first time in the ashram, I was introduced to a young swami (only a few years older than myself) who was said to be

Swami Satyananda's successor, although no one really understood what that meant at the time. When I first saw him, he was standing looking out of a window in a very serious mood. He was slim and long with a large, bony face; elegant long fingers, leaning against the window frame. His eyes were huge and a deep brown, framed by beautiful eyelashes a friend later commented no man had a right to possess. However, the expression that flashed from them was so sombre and unfeminine that it was more like a glare and my first impression was that he was very austere. Then he smiled . . . and the whole building lit up.

I knew at that first meeting that Swami Niranjan had the charisma of a guru in his own right; however, it was clearly not his time to be in the limelight. It was great fun larking about with him when he was no one special in the wider world and when he had time to sit about casually chatting in his office. He was easy to get on with, had a good sense of humour and did not object to me teasing him incessantly with my camera (luckily no one else seemed to be interested in photographing him at that stage). He was also intelligent, sincere, dedicated, compassionate and capable. Even at that time he had a compelling though gentle authority that brooked no challenge. Altogether he was one of the nicest people I had met and one for whom I had a natural respect.

Twelve years later, many things have changed. BYB has come into being and with it a shift in the teaching style for both visitors and long-term residents. Nowadays, we are taught about the Bhagavad Gita and the Yoga Upanishads, about Vedanta, Samkhya, tantra and the other great Indian philosophies, about new yoga techniques to be applied in society and in spiritual life. Studies of other great saints and yogic luminaries only emphasize the enormous achievements of Bihar Yoga. It is wonderful to find that not only is the Satyananda tradition as good as I felt it was, but that it, in fact, exceeds all my expectations when placed under close scrutiny and compared with other systems.

Life in the ashram for swamis today revolves around the students and their activities, and in catering for the growing number of devotees who are drawn to the bright light and deep wisdom of Swami Niranjan. Instead of weed pulling and stone

clearing, I now spend my time designing databases, working with others on the website and sweating over filing systems. Ganga Darshan is the busy ashram of acknowledged sages whose fame extends the length and breadth of India and beyond to the rest of the world.

A substantial difference between then and now lies in the style of our preceptors. Whereas one can observe Sri Swamiji in action, Swami Niranjan is more subtle and people often make the mistake of thinking he is not doing anything. Those who have been under his guidance for some time, however, know that this is very far from the case. The aim of both gurus has been to help us 'stand on our own two feet'. Whether the coaxing towards this goal has been done with a big stick or through the careful manoeuvring of situations and personalities, the movement has been inevitable and inexorable, if sometimes extremely difficult and painful.



Where learning is concerned, whether one reads the Upanishads or Swami Sivananda, the message is always the same: 'Nothing can be achieved without practice.' Theory without practice, in all Indian philosophical traditions, is not worth the paper it is written on, or the breath with which it is spoken. This understanding also underlies the lifestyle and teachings of Satyananda Yoga, past, present and for all time. Essentially, spiritual growth is a practical process that reaches beyond sadhana and academic studies to the art of living itself. This has not changed and this is the learning that we continue to pursue at Ganga Darshan."

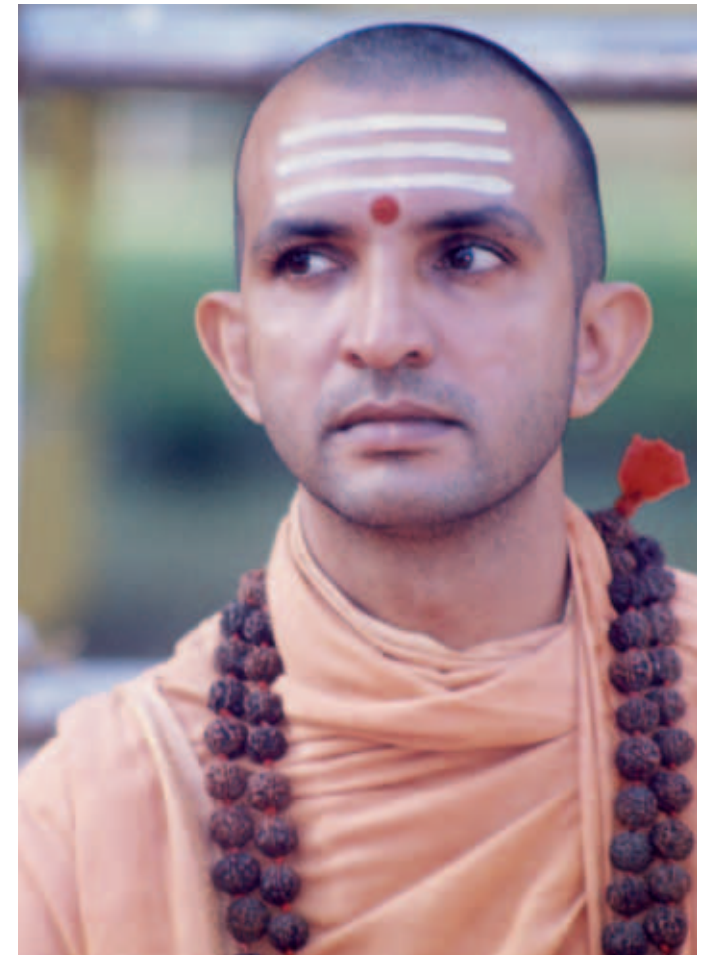
So we see that very different perspectives and attitudes are reflected in those who come for training in spiritual life. Breadth of understanding and the need for self-discipline are the training guidelines that we see employed by Swami Niranjan. He gathered the swamis together one evening on the sixth floor and explained this to us.

Total commitment

"The sannyasa training has to go on and it will go on. You see, when you plant a tree, you have to provide protection around it. If at that time the plant says, 'Why are you binding me? I want my freedom!' and rejects the barrier around it, then animals are going to come and eat it. That is definite. When the plant has grown big, it can provide protection to other beings, but as long as the plant is small, it needs to be protected. Similarly, at first sannyasins have to be protected and then they should also learn how to protect others.

When I lived with Sri Swamiji as a child, the things that I have seen him do and say – none of you have seen him like that. If it was not for his care and hardness, I would not be here today. I say that because I am realizing only now the value of that discipline and its outcome.

What kind of a person do you want to be? This is the question. How do you wish to develop in sannyasa? Sri Swamiji said, 'I want steel.' He gave such training also. Steel is tempered with heat and a 40-pound sledgehammer. He used his skills to



develop steel because he believes in that and his experiences are based on reality, on what he has seen, studied, discovered and known, and not on a mere philosophy or personal thought.

From time to time he reminds me, 'Niranjan, the mind is like a room. If you stop going in for a few months, even with everything closed it will become full of rats, cobwebs, dust and insects. If the room is not cleaned every day, spiders will get in and white ants will finish off your doors and windows. On the other hand, if you continue cleaning regularly, it maintains the health of the environment. The same thing has to be done with



the mind; it should never be left idle. The moment the mind becomes idle, it will attract different pests and cobwebs, and become weaker.' In order to have a higher level of mind one has to kill something within.

*Within you is the hidden God.
Within you is the immortal soul.
Within you is the fountain of joy.
Within you is immortality.
Kill this little I, die to live,
Live the divine life.*

This is a song by Swami Sivananda and the little 'I' he is talking about is the stuff in the mind. Passions and frustrations are part of this little 'I', and the only way to manage them is by creating a protection of disciplines. Disciplines create protection till one is internally strong and wise enough to provide shelter to others."

Swami Satyananda continues to inspire and embody these principles which form the base of the Bihar Yoga tradition. The Rajasooya Yajna, with its giving of wealth embodied in the form of Sat Chandi Maha Yajna, is just one way of demonstrating his teachings. During the event in 1998, Sadhavi Chandana, a Jain nun from Rajgir, Swami Tejomayananda from the Chinmaya Mission in Mumbai, Swami Maheshwarananda and Swami Santoshananda from Haridwar, all gave satsang. Kumar Sambhav Chaturvedi from Varanasi, a seven-year-old child prodigy, amazed everyone with his recitation of the Bhagavad Gita by heart.

The evening sessions saw vedic, Muslim, Christian and tantric ceremonies performed on different days. Rudra abhisheka was performed by Swami Saradananda from Mainpuri. Namaz was performed by Maulana Abdullah Bukhari of Jama Masjid, Munger; Christian Mass was conducted by Reverend Antoinette Schoenmaker from the Independent Church of Australia; and a yajna dedicated to the Divine Mother was conducted by the yoginis from Lalita Mahila Samajam Ashram, Thirueengomalai, Tamil Nadu.

Lalita Sharma and her troupe from Kolkata performed classical devotional songs and bhajans on the first two evenings and then Rila Hota's Odissi dance depicted the four *purusharthas*, aims of human life, culminating in *moksha*, liberation, in graceful dance form. On the final day, the royal wedding ceremony of Lord Rama and Sita was enacted. Simultaneously, the real wedlock of karma sannyasins Vedantamurti and Durgashakti, from Greece, took place as per the vedic tradition. Sri Swamiji himself sang, 'Sita Rama Manohara Jori, Dasharatha Nandana Janaka Dulari'. The message of this whole event was serve, love, give and be compassionate to others.

Serve, love, give

"I am creating a precedent, giving an example and a way to attain the godhead. You may practise mantra or prayers, you

may go to a temple or church, but never forget the unfortunate person who is suffering, who does not have what he needs. What he does not have, you and I have in plenty. If I have ten loaves of bread, I can easily give away five because he needs them and I don't. This good sense came to me in 1990, after coming to Rikhia, on the day of Kartik Poornima, when the moon is brightest. The voice came to me: 'Look after your neighbours as I have looked after you.'

I have a share in your fortunes. By this, I don't mean my physical entity. I love one and all without exception. I am not a limited individual. I was born with a destiny to fulfil. My guru told me everything about my mission and myself. Therefore, I am claiming one of your pockets. One pocket belongs to you and the other belongs to mankind. Divide your money, wealth and fortune. Divide your good luck and let mankind have a portion of it, otherwise you will have social problems.





This is my practical advice to you. I am not talking about spirituality now. The have-nots, numbering 20 to 30 percent of the population, are not only to be found in India or Africa, but all over the world. There are millions of blind, lame, deaf and dumb people. There are millions of orphans and destitute children. There are so many poor who need a helping hand. There are so many sick who need your love and care.

A life of comfort and luxury is a suicidal life. A simple life is a good and balanced life. Don't be affected by riches. Dollars cannot create destiny, dollars cannot create a personality. If you do not listen to this message, a day will come when the unfortunates will become 60 to 70 percent of the population. They will break into your houses, kidnap your children and steal your money. This is already happening in many countries. I am not just speaking about spiritual matters. I am talking of that reality which will help

your society. If there is heat, fire, disaster and death all around and you alone live in an air-conditioned room, for how long can you survive? So, you must try to improve the conditions outside your family. The world exists beyond your wife, husband and children. 'We two and our two' is not the solution.

The most important thing Swami Sivananda said was that just as there is an education system from kindergarten to university, similarly there is a schooling system in spiritual life. God exists, so you have to think about Him. You have to meditate and pray. You have to purify your heart. I asked, 'But how?' He said that the kindergarten of spiritual life is service. What comes next? Loving others. Then the next class is 'Give, give and give.' Don't say, 'You give to me,' say, 'I give to you.' This is primary spiritual schooling – 'serve, love and give.' This elementary class of spiritual life will prove very useful."

The Yoga Capsule

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

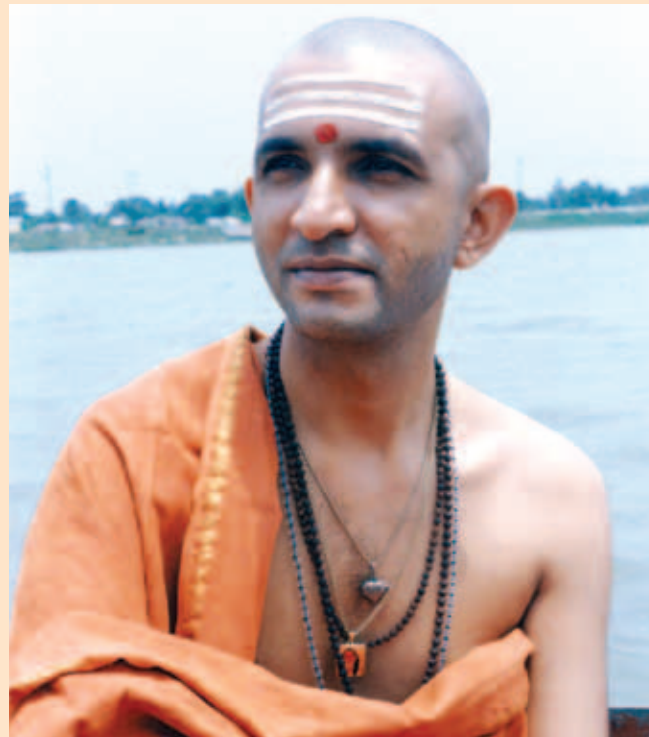
Many times I hear people say that one has to be a warrior to win in life. I disagree with that idea, because a warrior wins by shedding blood and suppressing others. I believe that we have to be gardeners. We have been given a barren piece of land and through our effort we have to convert it into a beautiful garden. And for that we have to work very hard. We have to remove the rocks and weeds, mix the earth and prepare proper beds. It is only then that we plant the seed. And once planted, we protect it.

This is the process that we go through when we practise yoga not to satisfy the whims of our mind, but to follow and experience the aims set by yoga. Yogic goals are very clearly defined: cultivation of awareness, disciplining and restructuring the personality, managing the mental and emotional distractions and disturbances, and becoming the observer of one's life and actions. These are the goals of yoga to begin with. When you have these as the focus and are striving to achieve them, you are doing yoga sadhana. When you follow the dictates of your mind, it is yoga practice. And when you integrate different yoga practices to aid the development of potentials in your life, you begin to live a yogic lifestyle.

There is a specific sequence of sadhana, a yoga capsule, that you can follow to incorporate yoga in your lifestyle. This will help in creating a positive and uplifting environment at home, improve mental efficiency, bring creativity in performance, harmonize the emotions, awaken the spirit and bring excellence in all that you do. This is the process of yoga in which you have to learn to become a gardener.

The first step is, when you wake up in the morning, practise three mantras: the Mahamrityunjaya and Gayatri mantras eleven times each and the 32 names of Durga three times. Every spiritual aspirant at the beginning of the day should practise these three mantras regularly. First, the

Mahamrityunjaya mantra, which is the mantra of healing, then Gayatri, which is the mantra to acquire wisdom and then the 32 names of Durga, to eradicate all disturbances, distractions and distresses from life. Every morning, after waking up, before thinking, before even getting out of bed, sit down quietly for five or ten minutes, chant the mantras, and then go about your business. Many people who have followed this system have felt a qualitative change in their life, thinking process, performance, understanding, associations and relationships.



The three mantras are three sankalpas, the seeds which are planted in the subconscious when the mind is peaceful, semi-dormant and not active in the waking state, not connected with the senses or sense objects. Just when you wake up, you are on the borderline between unconscious and

conscious, and that is the time when you plant the seed of a sankalpa. It is the same principle as that followed in yoga nidra.

Mahamrityunjaya mantra has been recognized since time immemorial as the mantra of awakening *prana shakti*, life force, and attaining health. It works on manipura chakra in the solar plexus, increases vitality and creates physical immunity. It is a healing mantra. Gayatri mantra is associated with ajna chakra, the 'third eye', the seat of wisdom and intuition. The chanting of Gayatri mantra creates the frequency or vibration which activates the ajna chakra, and all the problems of fear and aggression, anxiety and guilt that we see on our mental or psychic screen can be managed with the activation of ajna chakra. Gayatri mantra, according to tradition, has been the mantra to open the doors of consciousness, knowledge and perceptive wisdom, and to heal psychological scars. So Mahamrityunjaya mantra shields the body, Gayatri mantra shields the mind, while the Durga mantras invoke the force that protects us from all external negative forces.

Mantras are sound vibrations, they are not prayers. If you tried to translate them into another language in the form of prayer, they will no longer mean what they represent. And each sound vibration creates a different frequency within our personality, because the body is nothing but compressed energy which responds to vibrations.

When a particular state of mind is powerful, it changes the energy field of the body so that it becomes like a magnet to attract the corresponding energy. Thus a fearful energy attracts fear, an aggressive energy attracts aggression and a compassionate energy attracts compassion. Whatever you are experiencing in your consciousness, that change is not only taking place at the level of the head, but it also happens at the level of the heart which is the centre of expressing energies. To iron out the wrinkles in the field of consciousness which can create these energy patterns that attract the same forces again and again, Mahamrityunjaya mantra, Gayatri mantra

and Durga mantra are used to demagnetize the energies of the body, to strengthen and awaken the creative qualities.

The strong syllables of the Mahamrityunjaya mantra, *Tryambakam yajamahe* . . . create a vibration which removes the influences of *tamas* or stagnation. It rearranges the frequencies and vibrations in the body, and encourages health and healing. The purpose of Gayatri mantra's soft syllables, *Bhur bhuvah swah* . . . is to activate the corresponding centres



in the chakras and the brain which aid the process of learning and acquiring better understanding and perceptions. And the Durga mantras are also very hard-hitting mantras, with the continuous repetition of *Durga, Durga, Durga*. They remove the distresses from life.

As you chant the mantras, develop the thought of well-being in your mind. During the chanting of the Mahamrityunjaya mantra, the thought of physical well-being must be there as the *sankalpa* or focus. During the chanting of the Gayatri mantra,

the thought focus should be on acquisition of wisdom. The mantras are chanted first thing in the morning so that this is the first input and positive resolution that you are giving to your mind in the morning. With regular practice, you will discover that these mantras play a major role in cultivating inner strength, optimism and positivity.

Then, before breakfast, after finishing your morning routine, do your asanas and pranayama. Asanas are classified in two groups – dynamic and meditative. Although we begin the practice of postures in a dynamic way, our aim and effort should be to find a meditative state in this dynamic movement. A meditative state means there is focusing of awareness and energies. In Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* it is stated, "Asanas are physical postures in which you can be steady and comfortable." Many people believe that this refers to meditative postures only, but that is not so. The reference is to all postures because every movement of the body is an asana. It becomes an asana when the awareness and breath combine with the movement, and when that movement is not unconscious or jagged. When the mind and breath are not connected with the movement, then the posture is not an asana. Then it simply remains a movement, uncontrolled, unguided and dissipated. The energies are not harmonized. Even when we are practising dynamic movements, we should be able to combine mental awareness and breath with the movement, and experience comfort in the movement, we should be able to experience ourselves being centred in that dynamic movement. That is when it becomes an asana.

For a normal, healthy person only a few asanas are important. The first is *tadasana*, the palm tree pose. *Tadasana* is a practice in which the pressure and compressions of the bones and the spine are released. It is a practice of traction which releases compressions from different joints. The second asana is *tiryaka tadasana* or the swaying palm tree pose. This is another very important posture, very simple yet very effective, because here on one side a lateral stretch is taking place and on

the other compression, so that tensions from the sides of the body are released. This practice is very good to align the defects of the spine. The third is *kati chakrasana* in which you twist your body and squeeze the various organs of the body. This practice ensures proper circulation of blood to each and every organ, muscle and joint. And the fourth practice is *surya namaskara*, salute to the sun, in which the major movements are forward bend and backward bend. So through these asanas we cover



five different movements: traction, lateral stretch, twist, forward and backward bends. After this only one more asana needs to be practised, an asana of inversion, to reverse the force of gravity in the body. However, inverted asanas are slightly more complex and should be practised only under guidance.

After the five asanas, two pranayamas are important for daily practice. The first is *nadi shodhana*, alternate nostril breathing. It is a very effective practice to balance the nervous activities as it brings about a balance in the



functions of the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems and clears the pranic channels. The second practice is bhrumari pranayama, humming bee breath. Bhrumari creates a particular frequency of vibration inside the brain which releases the cerebral, nervous and hormonal agitations, and you move into a space of tranquillity, peace and contentment. So, three mantras, five asanas and two pranayamas – this is the practice for the morning.

Then during the afternoon when you feel tired or stressed out, practise a short yoga nidra. And then at night, when you come back home, another investment of five minutes is necessary. The practice is analysis of the events that have happened during the day. In your mind, go through the events of the day from the morning in sequence, right up to the moment when you are sitting down visualizing

your day. Look at the events and identify those where you encountered conflict, stress, aggression and fear. Just be an objective witness to all that has happened, and gradually, without reacting, bring a simple thought in your mind, 'Is there a better way to deal with this situation if it happens again?' You will discover that within a week of this practice you will be able to direct your efforts to manage the stressful situations in a better way. And, by observing and recognizing the stressors of the day, you eliminate them so they do not become unconscious seeds.

Then, just before you are ready to go to sleep, practise ten minutes of a short meditation. This is to connect with your inner values, strengths and peace, to put aside all the problems of the household and profession, to be at peace with yourself. During those ten minutes, there should be no thoughts of family or profession, no problem and no tension. You have 23 hours and 15 minutes to enjoy life. The spice of frustration and fight, the salt of expectations and desires, mix them well during the day and enjoy your food. But during these ten minutes, identify neither with your body with its experiences of stiffness and tiredness nor with the mind or mental experiences. No thought of rejection or pain, pleasure or happiness, promotion or demotion. For ten minutes, you are absolutely you, away from everyone else in the world. And say to yourself, 'I am not so and so. I am pure spirit, flawless, undisturbed, at peace with myself, discovering myself.' Isolate yourself from your fears, stresses and anxieties. Isolate yourself from your physical, emotional and mental connections. Just focus on the silence and space within. And if you have a mantra, repeat it for one or two malas at that time. Then go to sleep like a baby.

In this way we can gradually incorporate small routines and disciplines of yoga within our normal daily activities. Do this from Monday to Friday, and on Saturday do something different. Practise neti or different meditations such as ajapa



japa, antar mouna or trataka. On Saturday evening, if you are inclined, chant the Mahamrityunjaya mantra 108 times. And on Sunday, take off. That's it, this is the yoga capsule in your daily life.

Another capsule: once a year go to an ashram and live there in a simple manner. Change the environment from home to ashram, change your attitudes, work, the routine and associations, and you will find that you are recharging your batteries. Just one week of ashram living will bring a qualitative change in your life. That is the second capsule that you need to have at least once a year. And if you can maintain this discipline in your life for some years while you are following your other interests also, you will begin to experience the benefits of yoga in your life. Yoga will become a part of your life and not remain a practice. ॐ



January

Swami Niranjana visited Acharya Sadhavi Chandana at Virayatan, Rajgir, Nalanda.

Yoga camps were conducted at Kanker and Narayanpur, MP, from the 1st to 20th by Swami Sanyam, assisted by Sannyasi Yogaprem.

As BYMM continued to grow, the children structured training according to geographical zones. Propagators Nikesh, Santosh, Shobha and Babli conducted classes for more than 2,400 children in eight schools from the 7th to 13th, organized by the Yoga Mitra Mandal, Gondia, and Swami Asheshananda.

Training classes for demonstrators were given by Sannyasi Gyanswaroop and child yoga propagators Himanshu and Pritam for newly selected students from 28th January to 3rd February.

Yoga Mitra Mandal, Korba, conducted a yoga training camp for prisoners at the Korba sub-divisional jail from the 10th to 24th.

A yoga program was conducted by Swami Sumitrananda at the Atmadarshan Centre, Patna, from the 17th to 23rd.

A program was conducted at the Sports Authority of India (SAI) sports complex, Salt Lake, Kolkata, from 28th January to 3rd February by Swami Maheshananda and Siddhartha Bhushan.

At the invitation of Lt General Surjit Singh Sangra, GOC in C, Central Command, Indian Army, Swami Niranjana visited the Central Command headquarters at Lucknow on the 30th.

February

Swami Niranjana visited Mangrove Mountain and Rocklyn ashrams in Australia, from the 18th to 28th.

The 35th Foundation Day of BSY was celebrated on Basant Panchami. On the 21st and 22nd, Swami Niranjana gave satsang and performed havan.

March–September

BSY's original HMCs continued to adapt to new venues and modes, taught by Swami Swayambhunath at Sivananda Ashram, Munger, for asthma and respiratory problems in March, for general health in April and September, and at the Alakh Bara, Rikhia, in June for general ailments.

April

On the 2nd, Swami Niranjana gave satsang at Balika Vidyapeeth, Lakhisarai.

A yoga training program was held at 41st Brigade Headquarters, Lucknow, from the 5th to 15th by Swami Vigyanachaitanya and Jignasu Sudarshan along with a five-day session at the Army Public School.



Yoga Mitra Mandal, Korba, conducted a yoga training camp from the 9th to 24th at Laxmi Cement, Rajasthan.

The inauguration of Niranjana Yoga Shiksha Kendra, Saharsa, was held on the 21st and 22nd by Swamis Shankarananda, Gyanbhikshu, Nityachaitanya and Dharmadeva.

A course for parents and teachers was conducted by Swami Swayambhunath at DCC from the 23rd to 29th.

May

At Satyananda Ashram, Rajnandgaon, Swami Sanyam and Sannyasi Yogashikshananda held a residential yoga camp for children from the 5th to 13th.

Swami Nirajan inaugurated a yoga camp from the 10th to 16th, organized by the Red Cross Society, Motihari. Classes were

conducted by Swamis Nityachaitanya and Padmapad.

Swami Nirajan, accompanied by Swami Gorakhnath, inaugurated the newly constructed Satyananda Yoga Training Centre at Golbazar, Jabalpur, MP, on the 22nd.

A yoga camp for members of the 4th battalion of PAC (Provincial Armed Constabulary) was conducted by Swami Yogavijay and Jignasu Harigyanam from the 10th to 17th.

A yoga course was conducted from 17th May to 22nd June by Swami Maheshananda, Siddhartha Bhushan and Tapas Mitra at SAI, Kolkata.

Sannyasi Yogasindhu inaugurated a yoga camp organized by the Red Cross Society, Madhubani, from the 24th to 30th.

In Mumbai, Dr Swami Nirmalananda conducted a workshop at Seva Sadan from the 24th to 28th; a yoga retreat on 29th



May at NASSEOH, Chembur; and yoga programs on 5th June for Ghantali Mitra Mandal, Ghatkopar, and on 7th June at Arya Samaj, Santacruz.

Swami Atmabhishek conducted a program at NTPC's Auraiya gas power station from 31st May to 5th June.

June

Swami Nirajan inaugurated a yoga program for 6,000 children at the Polo Ground, Munger, from the 10th to 13th.

A BYMM Propagator course was conducted at Ganga Darshan from the 4th to 14th for children from Munger, Delhi, Ghatsila, Bilaspur and Kondagaon.

A yoga seminar was conducted in Faridabad and Ballabhgarh at Tecumseh Product India Ltd, from the 13th to 19th, by Swami Vigyanachaitanya and Jignasu Narasimha.

Programs were held at NTPC, Kahalgaon, between 14th June and 10th July by Swami Omkarananda, Sannyasi Mahaprajnananda and Jignasus Yantrashanti, Yogashruti and Ashwin.

July

Swami Nirajan escorted the first batch of BYB postgraduate students in MA (Yoga Philosophy) to Rikhia on the 3rd and 4th. Swami Satyananda handed the degree to each of the 10



successful students, acclaiming yoga philosophy as the basis of all other yogic disciplines and inspiring them to become people who give to others.

Guru Poornima celebrations at Ganga Darshan saw thousands of devotees from India and overseas chanting Saundarya Lahari, bhajans and Ramacharitamanas.

Swami Niranjana's visit to Chennai from 31st July to 3rd August again celebrated Guru Poornima and the inauguration of Shiva Darshan Yoga Ashram.

Swamiji visited the Shakti temple of Tiruverkkadu Mariamman where Sage Parashurama worshipped the Divine Mother, and Kanchipuram, the temple town of Tamil Nadu. He met the Shankaracharya of Kanchipuram, Sri Jayendra Saraswati Swamigal, and his successor, Sri Vijayendra Saraswati Swamigal. At the behest of the Shankaracharya, Swamiji visited the Kanchi Kamakshiamman temple, the Shiva temple of Lord Ekambaranathar and Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati Vishwa Mahavidyalaya, which has an International Indological Research Library housing a large selection of Indian scriptures in all Indian languages.

August

From 2nd August to 30th September, yoga programs were conducted in preparation for the Indore Yoga Convention by Swamis Shivaraj and Mudraroopta, Sannyasis Atmabodh, Shivajyoti, Yogashikshananda, Bhaktimurti and Tapogyanam, assisted by Jignasus Bhargava and Devachandra.

Swami Niranjana and ashram residents welcomed Lt General Surjit Sangra, GOC, Central Command of the Indian Army, to Ganga Darshan on the 18th, accompanied by Mrs Sangra and Major General Pushpinder Singh, GOC (MP, Bihar and Orissa).

A yoga program conducted by Swami Omkarananda was held at the yoga club of Barauni Refinery Indian Oil, Begusarai, from the 16th to 22nd.

Swami Satyananda celebrated the Jhoolan Utsav, Festival of Swings, at Paramahansa Alakh Bara, Rikhia, from the 21st to 25th.

A yoga camp was held for NTPC at Dadri, Gaziabad, from the 23rd to 29th, by Swami Maheshananda, Sannyasi Tapogyanam and Janaki Ranjan.



September

Janmashtami, Sri Krishna's birthday, was celebrated at Ganga Darshan with chanting of the entire Bhagavad Gita.

From the 8th to 12th, Swami Niranjana conducted the annual celebration at Ganga Darshan to commemorate the 112th birth anniversary of Swami Sivananda, the 52nd sannyasa birthday of Swami Satyananda and the Foundation Day of BYB.

Swami Niranjana travelled to South Korea and conducted programs at the J.H. Moon Yoga Centre, Seoul, Pusan University and Cheju National University from the 12th to 17th.

Swami Niranjana presided over an All India Yoga Convention held in Indore, MP, from 30th September to 3rd October.

October

Swami Niranjana gave public lectures during a yoga convention sponsored by Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd (BHEL) in Bhopal from the 4th to 7th. Swamis Gyanbhikshu and Padmapad conducted practical classes.

Swami Satyadharma and Jignasu Sudarshan conducted a program from the 4th to 8th at the Direct Taxes Regional Training Institute, Hazaribagh.

Swami Chidananda, President of the Divine Life Society, Rishikesh, visited Paramahansa Alakh Bara, Rikhia, from the 26th to 29th for a reunion with his gurubhai Swami Satyananda. Swami Niranjana escorted students and sannyasins from Ganga Darshan to the Akhara for his darshan.

BYB's cancer research project began on the 26th at the A.M. Charitable Trust, in association with the Confederation of Indian Industries, Apollo Hospitals, Hyderabad.

A yoga camp was conducted by Swami Vigyanachaitanya, assisted by Sannyasi Neelapadma and Jignasu Sridharana, at Tecumseh Products Ltd, Hyderabad.

A yoga program was held for state cabinet ministers of Andhra Pradesh from the 5th to 7th November at Jubilee Hall.

Yoga classes at Coramandal Fertilizer, Visakhapatnam, were held from 9th to 15th November.

BYB commenced a four-month Certificate Course in Yogic Studies for students from Spain, Italy, Germany, Sweden, Bulgaria, Greece, UK, Ireland, Latvia, Denmark, Norway, Austria, France,

Israel, USA, Australia, Uruguay, Argentina, Colombia, the Dutch Caribbean, South Africa, South Korea, Thailand and India.

November

A yoga camp was conducted at Balconagar from the 12th to 18th by Swami Satyabindu.

Swami Yogaratna conducted yoga sessions at Satyam Seva Kendra, Kolkata, from the 14th to 21st.

Swami Asheshananda, Raipur, conducted an HMC from the 16th to 22nd at the Lions Club, Raigarh, a class for diabetic patients at the Raigarh Diabetic Club, and spoke at Saraswati Shishu Mandir and Gyanganga Adarsh School.

Swami Nirajan attended a program organized by Patna Yoga Mitra Mandal, which was inaugurated at Bharatiya Nritya Kala Mandir on the 19th. The Chief Justice of the Patna High Court, Mr B.P. Singh, was chief guest.

December

Rajasoooya Yajna, in the form of Sita Kalyanam, was celebrated in Rikhia from the 5th to 13th. Each day began at Harlajori temple with kirtans and bhajans in the presence of Sri Swamiji. In the Alakh Bara, Rudrabhisheka was performed on the first day by Swami Sharadananda from Mainpuri, and on each of the nine days a yajna was conducted by six yoginis from Lalita Mahila Samajam Ashram, Tamil Nadu. Through these yajnas, devoted to Ganapati (Ganesha), the Navagraha (nine planets), Saraswati, Sudarshan (Vishnu's discus), Maha Vishnu/Lakshmi, Maha Rudra/Durga, Saundarya Lahari and Lalita, subtle beneficial forces manifested their presence by energizing the surrounding area.

Prasad of thelas, tricycles, bicycles, rickshaws and sewing machines with sewing kits was distributed to neighbouring villagers. On the first three evenings, the Tapovan complex was transformed into a Gurudwara, Sikh temple. After the arrival of the Sikh holy book, Guru Granth Sahib, the assembled guests rose to show respect and the Sikh musicians sang shabad kirtan. On the next three evenings, Shanti Devi Chailak regaled the audience with episodes from the Mahabharata presented in Pandavani style. The last two evenings saw Kuchipudi classical Indian dance and on the final day, the symbolic marriage of Sita and Rama.

Sri Swamiji's presence was all-pervasive, welcoming each guest. After the Ganapati Yajna he personally gave prasad, and he was at the entrance gate, sprinkling water on everyone's feet with a magnificent yellow rose, after the Sikh program.

Swami Maheshananda conducted programs in sports medicine for SAI, New Delhi, from the 7th to 20th, spoke at the Indian Sports Medicine Congress from the 21st to 23rd to doctors, scientists, psychologists and sports coaches, and visited the Gurukul Prabhat Ashram, Meerut.

At the request of the Inspector General of Prisons, Government of Bihar, BYB postgraduate students and BSY sannyasins conducted yoga training programs from the 12th to 18th for 306 prisoners in 11 district and sub-divisional jails in Jamshedpur, Begusarai, Khagassa, Katihar, Lohardagga, Bihar Sharif, Phulban Sharif, Dhanbad, Hazipur, Giridih and Madhubani.



Classes were also held from 30th December to 10th January for 168 prisoners in 7 district and sub-divisional jails in Naugachia, Lakhisarai, Chas, Giumla, Siwass, Kodrama and Sita Madhi.

Swami Satyananda Yoga Ashram, Vijayawada, AP, conducted a yoga camp in Chennai for senior citizens from the 16th to 22nd, and a camp at Anakapalle, Visakhapatnam.

Dr Sannyasi Yogasindhu spoke at a national seminar in Kanpur from the 22nd to 23rd.

A yoga training course was conducted by Swami Swayambhunath and Sannyasi Chinmayananda at Sivananda Ashram, Munger, from the 23rd to 30th.



“So the lifestyle of the sannyasins of BSY in Ganga Darshan ashram was changing noticeably as BYB courses continued to multiply?” the enquirer commented. “It must have been very busy here.”

“Yes,” I agreed, “but now a rhythm was developing on the campus; for example, the numbers of students for the Diploma and Postgraduate Courses continued to be small, then from October to January, Ganga Darshan would become intensely international with the large English medium Certificate Course. Then there was also the influx of devotees who visited as part of their Indian pilgrimage, including Rajasoooya yajna and darshan of Swami Satyananda in Rikhia and then Ganga Darshan. From February to May we had the Hindi medium Certificate Course swelling the ranks with students from virtually every state in India.”

Simultaneously the yoga movement in Australia was growing again and during these years, Swami Nirajan made several visits resulting in new inspiration for yoga therapy and research. The residential centres of Mangrove Mountain began parallel courses to the Yoga Certificate Course offered by BYB. The style was adapted to suit the western culture but it still preserved the basic inspiration of combining spiritual values with systematic and intensive training in yoga. I had interviewed Rishi Hridayananda at this time to tell us about how Satyananda Yoga began in Australia, and the revitalization of the yoga movement there.



Nurturing the yogic tree

"In September 1969 we met Swami Satyananda at a convention which was held in Richmond, Australia, organized by Roma Blair (Swami Nirmalananda). From then on we had a burning wish to go to BSY, India, and see what an ashram was about. In the early 1970s a yoga teacher and dear friend invited the family up to her property at Mangrove Mountain where we went almost every weekend to help prune the orange trees that were growing there. Joti Brunston had a dream one night and told us in the morning, 'I can see thousands of people coming here to practise yoga.' I also dreamt that all the trees were fully grown and they were covered with thousands of babies. Sri Swamiji said to Vivekananda and myself, 'Take care of the babies.'

In 1974 our two elder sons left for India during the school holidays and took sannyasa initiation. Then Swami Akhandananda came to manage Mangrove Mountain, the new ashram situated in the orange orchard on Mangrove Creek. I went to BSY myself and ended up managing the ashram in Kolkata – so many new insights! By 1994, however, both Vivekananda and myself thought we had

retired back to Australia and the ocean at Diamond Beach when we were recalled to India and instructed to live in Mangrove Ashram again and give it shape. I have only now realized that my dreams have been fulfilled and a new dimension has opened up for us in the form of a greater commitment to the upliftment of humanity.

Today, yoga in Mangrove has, with the cooperation of BYB, developed a Yogic Studies course which is the springboard to a more advanced level of yoga and teacher training. It has required all Satyananda yoga teachers to upgrade their skills and knowledge with in-service training so that they can become more specialized in areas of interest. Mangrove is also upgrading the accommodation for families and students and making the area a safe haven for the community.

The future of Mangrove will see an institute for higher studies and research into yoga becoming a reality in Australia. As we establish government accreditation for educational courses in Australia, it will lead the way to government recognized teachers through our Academy, which means the registered teachers will receive the benefit of industrial /institutional acceptance.

Students will become eligible to apply for scholarships and financial assistance, overseas students will be able to receive international visas and there will be increased opportunities to attract government support and concessions in the areas of education, research, immigration and tax.

As Mangrove puts into place an occupational health and safety management system, it will produce a development of policies, procedures and work methods creating a better communication structure for students, residents and visitors who come to Mangrove Mountain."

Swami Prembhav was brought up in Australia with a love for yoga and nature and was taught yoga by Mangrove swamis. She has also been one of the team working on Swami Niranjan's project to introduce Yoga Ecology as a course in BYB. Prem, how did yoga shape your life?

The seed of samskara

"I take off my shoes and run into the warmth and peace of a small Australian ashram with a long hallway, polished wooden floorboards and the strong smell of incense. Lying on the soft orange carpet, listening to the voice of my beautiful lady swami, the large wooden chair adorned with photos of that special Indian man was always there. The visualizations, stories, games, animal postures, kirtan, tambourines, it was so easy and perfect. The lentils cooking in the kitchen and the chocolate biscuits that only the kids devoured after class, these are the special memories, so deeply embedded in my mind.

Starting at the age of seven, my best friend and I went every week to our special yoga class. We were the only students and had full reign over our class and our loving Swami Bhaktimurti. She played with us and told us stories. We sang songs and danced, our little bodies so flexible and our minds so open and accepting, no judgement over the shaved heads and geru, we simply loved the warm, incense-filled ashram and the teachers. My first malas, how proud I was to hold them properly and chant the mantra Om, without ever questioning what I was doing it for, it was just what we did.

My friend and I grew up and our lives grew apart. We went to different schools, made different friends, and we practised no yoga for ten years but I can see now how the seed of yoga had been deeply planted in both of us. Slowly through time it was being protected and nourished, waiting for the perfect moment to push up through the soil. Both seeds grew into seedlings, both touched by guru's grace, both practising Satyananda Yoga in different parts of the country. We met for the first time after many years at Mangrove Mountain ashram. Like a flowing river turning each corner at the right speed and without fear or doubt, we were given mantra diksha, jignasu and karma sannyasa together. It all happened so quickly, easily and naturally. Twenty years later, I live in India as a poorna sannyasin.

There was a time, in 1991, after I had taken mantra diksha from Swami Niranjan, when my life was turning upside down and inside out, and I had no idea what these changes in my life meant. I had the opportunity to talk to Rishi Vivekananda who gave me the following advice:

'Rest assured that you have found something so special in the form of your guru, Swami Niranjanananda. A guru of such magnitude will ensure that you will always have the flow of grace in your life and never have anything to worry about.

'We have seen the brilliance and power of Swami Satyananda and he has influenced all of our lives; however, he has given us something even more brilliant in the form of Swami Niranjan. We know that Sri Swamiji is an extraordinary person, but we cannot imagine what the future will be with Swamiji.'

These are words I have never forgotten. And today I feel that if I can dive into sannyasa with my heart and soul and surrender to my divine guru, to offer my all to him, then I can ask for nothing more. I used to believe it was my own will that brought me to sannyasa. Now I realize a force so much greater has brought me to where I am, and it is this force that will guide me on, no matter what. I feel that guiding force is his love, and it was this that touched both my friend and I as children, and continues to



pull us closer and closer to the light. The spirit once touched by pure love can never forget. Now I live immersed in his light and love. He teases me, laughs at me, scowls at me, pushes me to find my strength and courage, to realize my potential, to use my mind, to sing with my heart, to be who I truly am.

The future is totally unknown, but I pray that the faith in me is strong enough to move along this unknown path, knowing that Swamiji will guide me exactly where I have to go, to a place I do not know. Only he can know that, but I am certain even if it is the most difficult path, it will lead to the most beautiful place, shining like gold."

In 1999, taking yoga to different pockets of society continued to be a reigning theme. Swamiji was invited by Lt General Surjit Singh Sangra, GOC in C, Central Command, Indian Army, to visit the Central Command headquarters at Lucknow while swamis conducted yoga training programs for over 1,700 army personnel.

The medical fraternity also received significant attention as Swamiji initiated research projects and spoke at several

seminars. BYB's cancer research project began at the A.M. Charitable Trust in association with the Confederation of Indian Industries, Apollo Hospitals, Hyderabad. A Yoga Orientation Training Program by Sannyasis Atmatattwa and Neelapadma at the Apollo Hospital was attended by oncologists, surgeons, cardiologists, psychologists, physicians, nurses and complementary health practitioners from other areas of Hyderabad. They also addressed patients from the Apollo Heart Club Foundation on National Diabetics Day. In Patna, Swamiji addressed doctors from the Indira Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences about the research activities taking place in yoga and its relevance as an alternative therapy. On another occasion, he addressed doctors of the Indian Medical Association on the scientific research being conducted in yoga and its efficacy regarding total health.

Guru Poornima celebrations at Ganga Darshan this year saw thousands of devotees from different states of India and the globe chanting Saundarya Lahari, bhajans and Ramacharitamans. Swamiji initiated aspirants into mantra, jignasu and karma sannyasa and during Guru Paduka Poojan

held from dawn to noon, more than 6,000 disciples and devotees gathered in the ashram.

This year the yoga movement in southern India was strengthened with the inauguration of Shiva Darshan Yoga Vidyalaya. For the inaugural ceremony, the yoginis of Sri Lalita Mahila Samajam, Thirueengomalai, performed Sri Lalita Maha Yajna, and Swamiji appointed Swami Gambhirananda as acharya of the ashram.

Swamiji's travels in India were becoming increasingly intense. He presided over an All-India Yoga Convention held in Indore (MP)



in which more than 5,000 people attended. He also gave public lectures during a yoga convention sponsored by Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd (BHEL) in Bhopal where he was accompanied by Rishis Arundhati and Vasishta who spoke to school children. Swamiji also met with doctors and surgeons of BHEL here and it was proposed that a medical research group be established in Bhopal, with BSY representatives conducting research along with the doctors there. Since then, several research projects have been undertaken here jointly by BHEL and BSY.

It was a special blessing for the students when Swami Niranjana travelled to Rikhiapheeth with them to meet Swami Chidananda,

the President of the Divine Life Society in Rishikesh, and Swami Satyananda's gurubhai, who was visiting Rikhiapheeth. It was touching to see the depth of affection and respect between Swami Sivananda's disciples, and fascinating to observe how well they knew each other.

So it is inspirational to know that we belong, have been invited into, and some of us even initiated into a tradition of such saintly people. Saintly, not in the way they present themselves, but in the purity of their expression, the selflessness of their lives and the radiance of their presence.



Yoga Ecology

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

In both the vedic tradition and modern physics, there is a 'unified field' theory, which states that every cell of our body is interconnected. Similarly, there is a connection between every life form on this planet. We are not isolated individual beings. For example, there is a connection through the breath and the air we breathe. Today we may be breathing the same air exhaled by Christ, Mohammed and Krishna, and many others. We are connected to the past and the future by living in the present. The same connection exists with the planet and creation. If the earth were to blow up, the solar system would definitely be affected and each planet would feel the earth's destruction. If our solar system is destroyed, the galaxy will also be destroyed and so on. If our galaxy is destroyed, other galaxies will be affected. Therefore, an ecological balance has to be maintained.

In the vedic culture, systems of personal, global and universal healing were practised. The ancient vedic rishis and seers were the scientists of their times, and when science has a spiritual bent, it leads to the development of civilization. They said that one has to live in harmony with the cosmic self, and devised practical ways of avoiding ecological disasters and maintaining the natural balance of the planet and its relationship with the universe. Their vision was that if the tattwas and life forms of the planet are in harmony, that effect spreads throughout the entire universe. They devised certain methods which influenced the personality and the environment, inducing harmony and removing imbalances. These methods included upasanas, havans and yajnas, which are not just rituals, but processes of trying to unite the life form of this body with the universal body.

In that process it is the *matri shakti* or feminine force with which one has to connect. We are born out of a feminine body

and our first contact and associations are with our mother. Similarly, the universe came out of *hiranyagarbha*, the golden womb. Birth represents an extension of the feminine force. The entire world was created, nurtured and sustained by *matri shakti*. Similarly, the quality of goodness is recognized as representing the feminine force. In Sanskrit, sympathy, love, compassion and the ability to nurture are all feminine qualities. All the good qualities of life are feminine in nature. *Prakriti*, cosmic energy, *srishti*, creation, and *shakti*, energy, the powers of creation, are also feminine. When we invoke that power, we connect with the goodness in life. We begin to sympathize with the effect of the wrongs and try to make them right.



This is not the first time in human history that our planet has undergone a crisis. Every civilization has had problems, whether air pollution, water pollution, or overpopulation, and yet the earth has always found a way to maintain its balance. In each yuga or age, there has been growth and decline. This is the cycle of the world. One lights a flame to dispel fear and ignorance. In the immediate vicinity there is light, but as you go further away the light diminishes, until you cannot see it at all. Similarly, events are seen in the darkness of time and space. As we move further away from them in the course of time, they are remembered as experiences, then as history, then as myth and later forgotten. Yajna is a point of light in the upswing and downswing of civilization.

Yajna is not just the fire ceremony. Real yajna is expressing your sentiments and identifying with the object of worship. Tree pooja is also a form of yajna. When we perform tree pooja, we are coming in contact with nature. This *sambandh*, contact or communication, has to happen for spiritual development. Communication is being able to interact with the environment with inner sensitivity. If you see someone suffering by the road, you may choose to go and help. If you see a withered plant in need of water, you may choose to give it water or ignore it. Even a simple act like giving water is a form of communication. You are conveying your sympathy and compassion, and that is what is received. In this case words have no meaning.

Human beings have the ability to communicate with each and every part of creation in a non-verbal manner, but we are so used to communicating through speech that we have lost our non-verbal skills. In *prakriti*, or nature, the same energy and spirit is flowing in all aspects of creation, so the communication between your life force and the life force inherent in others is not mental, intellectual or verbal, but communication of thoughts and feelings. In yoga ecology, the first attempt is to communicate and have empathy with

nature, not to misuse nature, but to enhance the beauty, growth and birth of nature.

The body is matter, the senses are expressions of matter, but the mind, thoughts, feelings, emotions and spirit are all energy. Communication happens in the realm of energy, in the non-material dimension. Energy simply brings into play the inherent nature that already exists in different things. When two pieces of wood are rubbed together, a spark is created and then fire. Fire was created because it was inherent in wood. Similarly, when you are able to develop empathy with a plant, a tree or any other object of creation, you are connecting your energy with it. The energy inherent in that tree comes alive, which is the principle of yoga ecology.

In order to develop this energy communication, we start with tree pooja, which is the first step in yoga ecology. It is a very simple act. Try to choose the weakest tree in the garden, so that you can see how it responds to tree pooja after one month. Every day at sunset, light a small candle or an oil flame in front of the tree, place a flower there, light a stick of incense and pour a small bowl of water at the base of the tree. Then for ten seconds close your eyes. Become that tree. If the tree is sick, feel the sickness of the tree and say a prayer for its well-being. "May you become strong and healthy. May you become well to nurture life." After some time the tree will become healthier and stronger. If you continue with this practice with full belief, trust and compassion, you will understand the tree is responding to your actions. Of course, the process has to be developed; it cannot happen in a day or a week. You have to fine-tune the frequency of your brain to receive the waves being transmitted by the tree.

This is the beginning of your connection with nature – not just admiring the tree, but feeling a connection. A great sense of satisfaction and fulfilment comes, happiness and hope come. That is the spirit of yoga ecology. Some movements



say hug a tree. The Satyananda yoga ecology movement says adopt a tree, worship a tree, be one with the tree, feel for the tree. Although tree pooja looks simple, it has a deep meaning, because it is worshipping Mother Earth, the source of all nourishment and life. Tree pooja is a way of honouring and remembering that transition where matter is no longer inert but contains a spark of life and consciousness. It is also a way of connecting oneself with nature, and through nature with the divine.

After tree pooja, the next component of yoga ecology is yajna. Yajna is a process of cleansing the mind through the chanting of mantras, through connecting oneself with nature,

the elements and the environment, and experiencing the external purity internally. To teach the science of yajna, first we have to understand the ingredients used, the properties of the herbs and wood, the properties contained in the ash and the smoke, and their effect on the environment. We need to discover from the tradition which ingredients purify the air in a particular way and create a balance in the atmospheric conditions. Just as burning a handful of chillies can create a drastic change in the environment, a handful of other herbs can help to purify the environment. Each mixture of herbs and woods used during yajna has its own properties. Some remove toxins from the body upon inhalation, some uplift the mind, some bring about balance in the motor and sensory nervous systems, some help to destroy the pollutants that we breathe in from the environment. It is possible to induce a change in the mental patterns and attitudes, to heal illnesses and diseases of the body by using certain combinations of wood and herbs in a yajna.

The vedic seers recognized that yajna, upasana and havans are the means of identifying with the universe. There was an understanding of how to maintain ecological balance. They knew which herbs would cleanse and purify the soul, the air and the water. In the vedic age every household performed small yajnas, or sandhyas, three times a day with the smoke curling up into the atmosphere in the heavens. By burning different combinations of herbs and wood, smoke is created which rises and combats air pollutants.

In the past, yajna was the accepted way of creating a balance in the environment. There is a scientific theory which postulates that the sulphur dioxide resulting from volcanic eruptions rises and eventually counteracts the effects of excess carbon dioxide already in the atmosphere. What are considered to be toxic fumes can actually counterbalance the pollution we have put in the environment.

Swami Satyananda has said, “Decades ago, when I was investigating the need of society, I decided yoga would play a vital role. Today yoga has become a common word throughout the world. Now the time has come to start teaching the system, process and tradition of yajnas and havans, because that will be the need of society in this century.”

According to the vedic tradition, yajna has three components: deva pooja, worship of the divine; prakriti, connection with nature; and participation of the individual as the worshipper. Yajna creates an environment where you are in tune with yourself and nature. Yajna is not a religious activity or ritual. The tradition speaks of over 200 different kinds of yajna: to improve the quality of the soil, the quality of the air, to bring forth rain, for progeny, etc.

In India, a centre for yajna research has used the ash from yajna to fertilize barren soil. In Munger, some local farmers also experimented with ash from the Sat Chandi Yajna. A handful of eggplant seeds were covered with ash overnight



and then planted beside a row of seeds not exposed to the ash. The seeds dipped in ash grew much taller and were more full-bodied than the normal seeds. Chemicals damage the soil. A study comparing the quality of soil in India and in USA concluded that the soil in USA had the capacity to feed the entire world for 50 years, whereas the soil in India could feed the entire world for 200 years, because the agrarian culture in India used natural fertilizers, rather than chemicals which diminish the soil's vitality.

The vedic tradition emphasized the importance of living naturally. Living naturally does not mean that you leave all the comforts and luxuries and ‘go bush’. It means understanding nature, caring for nature, supporting nature, encouraging nature to perform its duties by maintaining this subtle balance. A different type of mentality has to be developed to sensitize people to the process of upasana or worship. The selfish, consumer mentality may give pleasure for a few years, or a lifetime, but the destruction caused to human society and to the planet is irreversible. We are overly conscious of ourselves and as a result fail in our interactions with other people and nature. How can we expect then to interact with the divine nature? Spirituality becomes only a philosophy, not a part of people's lives. As a result, we have been unable to maintain a connection with the divine, transcendental power, and that has left us weak.

Our main role is to act as catalysts to improve, not destroy, the quality of our existence. Although a lot is being done to preserve and protect nature and to discover alternate sources of energy, there has been irreversible damage to the environment. Planting trees and preserving what is left of the rain forests is not the real solution. We can help to purify the atmosphere, but we cannot replenish what has been lost.

Today, nature is no longer our home. Urbanization, concrete jungles and polluted environments are our home,



and we call this progress. As time passes, human beings are losing contact with nature. That is the trend of modern civilization because we have been misusing nature and the natural resources for our own satisfaction and gain. In this way we are killing our own planet as well as ourselves. If there is no mother, then there are no sons and daughters.

The devastation happening around the world at all levels has to be recognized, not in a political manner but in a more humane, humanitarian manner. There is no use trying to change the laws, because laws are not pro-human, they are pro-society, pro-civilization. There seems to be a clash between humanity and civilization. We can become human beings again by connecting with nature. Nature connects us to the transcendental, the divine, the cosmos. This is the attempt of yoga ecology – to connect and, where we can, to rectify the imbalances we have created. Through yoga ecology we can learn how to rejuvenate and revitalize the nature around us. ॐ



January

Shanti Darshan Yogashram, Bokaro, conducted a Kriya Yoga course.

Satyananda Ashram, Rajnandgaon, and the Bharatiya Jain Association, Jagdalpur, organized a program from the 2nd to 17th conducted by Swami Sanyam.

Classes were held at the Central Jail, Jagdalpur, from the 4th to 15th, and camps were conducted for Kanker Yoga Mitra Mandal, MP, from the 22nd to 31st, and in Kanharपुरi, Jangleshwar and Mohad by Sannyasis Prabhujiyoti, Yogarpan and Dharmatattwananda.

Shanti Darshan Yogashram, Bokaro, conducted HMCs from January to June.

Two camps were conducted at NTPC, Kahalgaon, Bhagalpur, by Swami Omkarananda and Sannyasis Atmanubhuti and Mahapragyananda.

Swami Hrishikeshananda, Bilaspur, conducted classes at Sajodia Dharamsala from the 9th to 15th, and at MDI (SECL) from the 13th to 16th February.

Swami Atmabhishek gave classes organized by the Lions Club, Korba, from the 16th to 22nd.

Dr Swami Nirmalananda addressed the conference of the Association of Physicians of India at the Birla Science Centre, Jaipur, on the 23rd.

Swami Sumitrananda conducted classes at the Atma Darshan Centre, Patna, from the 23rd to 29th.

February

Basant Panchami, the 36th Foundation Day of BSY, was celebrated at Ganga Darshan on the 9th and 10th. The program included havan, kirtan and musical recitals.

Atma Darshan Yogashram, Bangalore, organized a Teacher Training Course from 5th February to 18th March at ELA with Swami Anandakumar.

Sannyasi Maheshwaracharya and propagator Suprabhat

conducted an Instructor's course at Sivananda Ashram from the 22nd to 29th.

Swami Satyadharma travelled to Australia to help establish the Satyananda Yoga Academy (SYA) at Mangrove Mountain. She conducted yoga seminars to help promote SYA and BYB in Sydney, Rocklyn, Armidale, Taree, Canberra and Perth.

March

An HMC for asthma and respiratory diseases was held at BSY, Rikhia unit, in March, and for general ailments in June.

Gondia Yoga Mitra Mandal and Swami Satyabindu conducted two HMCs in March for general ailments, asthma and respiratory disorders.

Swami Niranjana gave programs in France and Greece from 20th



March to 4th April.

Satyananda Ashram, Rajnandgaon, organized a program at Navyuk Sindhu Mandal from 27th March to 4th April, conducted by Swami Nityachaitanya, and an ashram residential course for children from 5th to 13th May, conducted by Rajeev Ranjan.

April

Swami Niranjan established the Yoga Publications Trust (YPT). Swami Vigyanachaitanya and Jignasu Kapilmurti conducted a camp at the National Police Academy, Hyderabad, from the 3rd to 12th.

HMCs were conducted by BYB students from 3rd to 20th April at Ganga Darshan, and by Swami Padmapad for Motihari and Muzaffarpur Yoga Mitra Mandals at the Red Cross Association

premises from 8th to 14th and 15th to 21st April.

Swami Vibhooti conducted a program from 16th April to 10th May at Shiva Darshan Yogashram, Chennai, organized by Swamis Gambhirananda and Vajrapani, and also at the Indian Bank at Ethiraj Salai and the Lion's Club.

Swami Atmabhishek conducted a seminar at ACC's Lakheri Cement Works Gymkhana from the 17th to 23rd.

Sahibganj Yoga Mitra Mandal conducted classes in local schools from 20th April to 19th May.

Swami Gyanbhikshu, Jignasus Satyasandhan and Yogapadmini conducted a program at NTPC, Dadri, from 25th April to 2nd May.

Shanti Darshan Yogashram, Bokaro, conducted courses for young people during April, May and June.



May

Courses were conducted by Swami Satyabindu at Jagdalpur from the 1st to 20th, by Swami Gorakhnath at Kondagaon, by Swami Atmabhishek at Bijapur, by Sannyasi Narasimha at Narayanpur and Sukma from 22nd May to 11th June, and by Swami Nityachaitanya at Kanker and Dantewara from 3rd to 23rd July.

A course was conducted from the 9th to 13th May by Swamis Gyanbhikshu and Yogakanti for the Income Tax Department, Ministry of Finance, at the Ministerial Staff Training Unit's new headquarters in Patna.

In Mumbai, Dr Swami Nirmalananda conducted workshops on 28th May, organized by Yoga Samskara Kendra, Ghatkopar; from 29th May to 2nd June, organized by the Satyananda Yoga Centre, Mumbai; on 3rd June, organized by Ghatkopar Rotary Club; on 6th June, arranged by Yoga Circle BARC; on 7th June, organized by Ghantali Mitra Mandal and Arya Yoga Kendra, Santacruz; and on 8th June at Yoga Sadhana Kendra, Chembur.

Swami Atmabhishek, Ajmer Yoga Mitra Mandal, conducted a seminar in Noida from the 16th to 26th and a course in Neel Padma Kunj, Ghaziabad, on the 28th and 29th.

June

Bihar Yoga Bharati was recognized as a deemed university by the Government of India on 7th June 2000.

Swami Niranjan conducted a program hosted by the Satyananda Yoga centre based in Llandeilo, Wales, between the 8th and 11th.

A BYMM/YRF research project was conducted from 4th June to 15th October, involving 700 children.

BYMM conducted a program for 6,000 children at the Polo Ground, Munger, from the 25th to 28th. Sri Ramnandan Yadav, DM, Munger, and Abdullah Bukhari, Imam of Jama Masjid, Munger, attended and Swami Niranjan addressed the children.

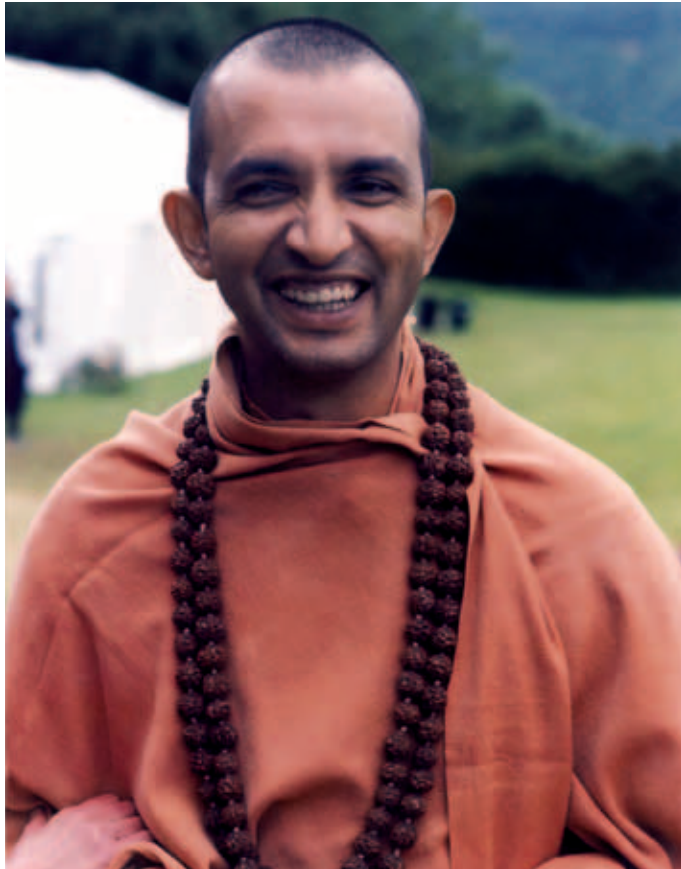
A workshop organized by the Yoga Mitra Mandal, Bharat Heavy Electrics Ltd (BHEL), Bhopal, was conducted by Swami Mangalteertham from 12th to 26th June.

July

Swami Nirajan and Sri V.K. Agrawal, Chairman of the Railway Board, Ministry of Railways, New Delhi, inaugurated a six-month pilot project in Railway Training Programs at IRIMEE Jamalpur. Swami Mangalteertham conducted programs for Satyananda Yoga Kendra, Indore, from the 4th to 9th at the Centre for Advanced Technology (CAT), the State Bank of Indore, the IMA and the Central Jail.

A program for the Central Industrial Security Force, Unit Balco-Korba, was conducted by R.S. Chauhan from 4th July to 5th August.

A seminar was conducted by Swami Yogaratna from the 18th to 25th at the Park Hotel, Kolkata.



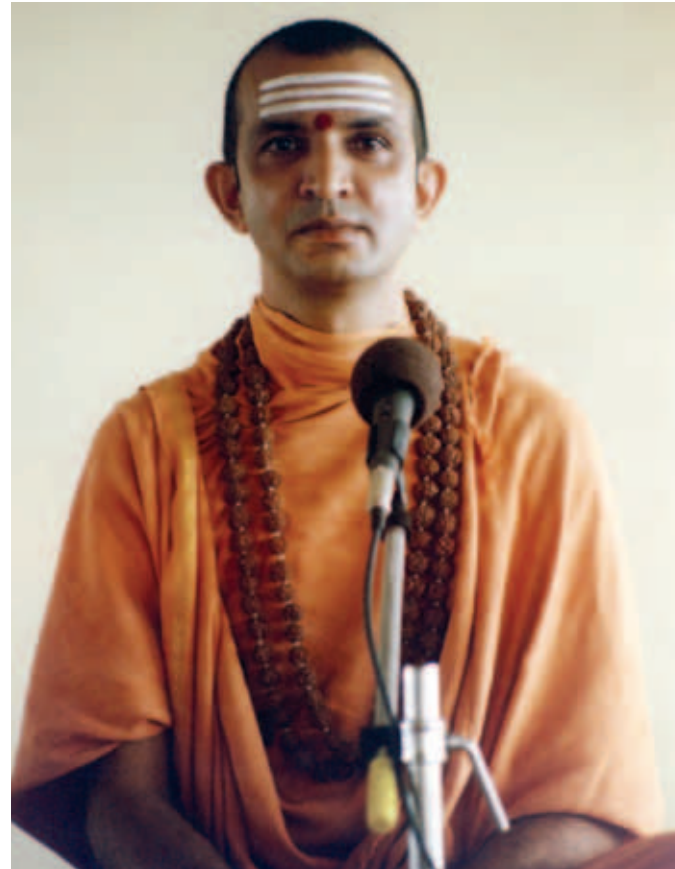
Guru Poornima was celebrated at Ganga Darshan from the 14th to 16th with chanting, meditation and havan.

Programs were conducted in Bhagalpur for NTPC staff in July and August by Swami Omkarananda and Sannyasi Mahapragyananda.

August

On the 5th, Swami Nirajan addressed doctors at the Mahavir Cancer Hospital, Patna, and IAS officers at the IAS Club. On the 6th he visited the Patna Yoga Mitra Mandal.

The celebration of Jhoolan Utsav, the Festival of Swings, at Rikhia was held from the 11th to 15th. Swami Satyananda gave darshan and satsang each day.



Swami Maheshananda and Muktesh Kumar conducted a program at Salt Lake, Kolkata, from the 17th to 23rd in Central Park.

From the 24th to 26th, training was given to police officers and constables at Yoga Prashikshan Rakshit Kendra, Darri, under the auspices of Korba YMM.

September

Swami Swayambhunath conducted a program for District Administrative Officers from the 1st to 7th, organized by the District Magistrate, Katihar.

Swami Maheshananda conducted a program at the Allahabad Gymnastics Association.

HMCs were conducted by Swami Nityachaitanya and Sannyasi Narasimha at BSY, Munger, and Rikhia from the 3rd to 20th September; and by Swami Omkarananda at Ananda Darshan Ashram, Bhagalpur, from the 5th to 20th September and October.

Sannyasis Srimukhananda and Harikripa from Jaipur conducted programs in schools, colleges and universities in Chandigarh, Amritsar, Patiala, Jalandhar, Pathankot, Kapurthala and Phagwara. Refresher programs were held at GACL Darlaghat, District Solan, HP, from the 10th to 14th October and at its Ropar unit, Punjab, from the 16th to 20th October.

Swami Atmabhishek conducted classes at Greenfields Public School, Dilshad Garden, East Delhi, from the 18th to 23rd.

Swami Nirajan conducted the annual program at Ganga Darshan from the 8th to 12th to celebrate the birth anniversary of Sri Swami Sivananda, the sannyasa initiation day of Swami Satyananda and Bihar Yoga Bharati.

From the 11th to 15th, Swami Vigyanachaitanya and Sannyasi Tapogyanam conducted a program at the National and Regional Academies of Direct Taxes Institutes, Nagpur.

Classes were conducted in Hazaribagh by Swami Swayambhunath from 11th to 15th September and from 16th to 20th October.

Swami Omkarananda conducted courses at Barauni Oil Refinery Yoga Club, Begusarai, from the 18th to 22nd.

Satyananda Yoga Centre, Jabalpur, organized classes at the Officers Mess from the 18th to 22nd with Sannyasi Dhyamurti.

Satyananda Ashram, Rajnandgaon, Sannyasi Dharmatattwa and Smt Jayshree Mirani conducted classes at the Jain Baghicha from 24th September to 4th October.

Swami Sanyam conducted a program for Satyananda Yoga Centre, Mumbai, from 25th September to 1st October.

October

Swami Niranjana formed a group for young people of college age called Yuva Yoga Mitra Mandal, the Youth Yoga Fellowship (YYMM).

Swami Atmabhishek conducted a program organized by IYFM Lucknow Centre from the 14th to 19th at the Shakti Club, Indira Nagar, and a seminar at the Community Centre, Kendriya Vihar, Noida, from 31st October to 14th November.

On the 22nd, Swami Niranjana inaugurated the Vidya Bharati Central Bihar Regional Sports Meet at the Polo Ground, Munger.

Swami Satyadharma from BSY conducted programs in South Korea and Hong Kong.

November

Swami Omkarananda and Sannyasi Tejomayananda organized a yoga yatra in the villages of Anadipur, Bamshipur and Sri Sri 108 Baba Bhadeshwar Nath Pahad in Bihar.

A children's course was held in Korba from the 13th to 20th by Chandanaram Sahu.

The Rajasooya Yajna, Sita Kalyanam and Sat Chandi Mahayajna were conducted at Paramahansa Alakh Bara, Rikhia, from 23rd November to 1st December. Swami Satyananda expressed his love for God in the form of the Mother. Discourses on the Ramayana were given by Smt Krishna Devi from Bhagalpur. An Eastern Orthodox Christian liturgy of the unction (to Mother Mary), conducted by Father Vissarion from Greece, served as a prelude to the worship of Devi. Sat Chandi Mahayajna commenced on the 26th with chanting of the Durga Saptashati mantras. Good luck kits, tricycles for the handicapped, *thelas*, carts, sewing machines and other substantial items were given to the needy. On the last two days HH Swami Poonyananda Maharaj, Acharya of Niranjani Akhara, Varanasi, gave enlightening discourses.

December

Three one-week camps were conducted by Swami Atmabhishek at the three townships of NMDC's projects at Bailadila iron ore mines.

Swami Anandakumar conducted a course at Ganga Darshan from the 4th to 9th.

A course was conducted from the 23rd to 31st at Sivananda Ashram, Munger, by Sannyasi Chinmayananda.

On the 27th, Swami Niranjana spoke at the ITC Workers' Institute, Munger, organized by Mahila Yoga Mitra Mandal, Munger.



 This was the year when Bihar Yoga Bharati was recognized as a deemed university by the Government of India. Universities of great renown such as Nalanda, Vikramshila, Takshashila and Mahashala have flourished in Bihar in the past and in this age, BYB has the distinction of being the first yoga university in modern India and in the modern world. This was an historical event. One of the results of this professional approach was elucidated by Swamiji in a satsang when he described how several students of BYB had been invited to join different universities, medical institutions and resorts as yoga teachers.

The Railway Safety Review Committee 1998 had recommended that yoga and meditation should be imparted to trainers in all training institutes and accordingly, Swami Niranjana and V.K. Agrawal, Chairman of the Railway Board, Ministry of Railways, New Delhi, inaugurated a six-month pilot project in Railway Training Programs at IRIMEE Jamalpur, where four categories of railway officers and staff would be given specialized yoga training according to their requirements. Pilot projects were also started in Chandausi and Tughlakabad.

In September, a five-day program was conducted by Swamiji at Ganga Darshan to celebrate the birth anniversary of Sri Swami Sivananda, the sannyasa initiation day of Swami Satyananda and the formation of BYB university. Each morning havan was conducted, devoted to Shiva on the first morning, Vishnu on the second, Ganesha on the third, Surya on the fourth and Durga on the fifth with the chanting of their associated mantras. Several eminent guests participated in the program such as M.K. Kaw, Secretary of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt of India; Raj Kumar Mahaseth, ex-Minister of the Govt of Bihar; D.P. Yadav, ex-Deputy Minister of Education for the Govt of India; Ramnandan Prasad, DM, Munger; Maulana Abdullah Bukhari, Imam of Jama Masjid, Munger; R.K. Kateria, IG of Police, Patna; Dr S.N. Srivastava, Vice-Chancellor, and Dr S.R. Sircar, ex Vice-Chancellor, of TM Bhagalpur University, and Chairman of the Inter University Board, Patna.



The Yoga Publications Trust (YPT) was established this year to streamline the ever-expanding publishing projects. This was also the year when BYMM conducted its landmark research involving 700 children, the results of which Swamiji presented to a panel of educationists in France on his visit there later in the year.

The France visit was particularly significant. Apart from meeting and giving diksha to students of Swami Yogabhakti, founder of RYE (Research on Yoga in Education), Swamiji presided over an international conference organized by RYE-

France at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris. There were several learned speakers at the conference including Prof Rene Barbier, Director, Dept of Educational Sciences, Paris VIII University; Dr Maria Katsiou-Zafrana, Associate Prof of Psychology, Dept of Pre-school Education, Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki, Greece; Dr Ulrike Ludtke, Assistant Prof, Special Education Dept, Bremen University, Germany; Dr Marilyn Rossner, educationalist, Canada; Jacques de Coulon, philosopher and principal, College St Michel, Fribourg, Switzerland; Dr Noa Blass, researcher and Head of Musical Programs for the Handicapped, Ministry of Education, Israel; and Andre de Peretti, UNESCO consultant and President of the Staff Training Committee of the Ministry of Education, France.

Swamiji's next European stop was Satyanandashram, Paiania, Greece. He presided over the 'Yoga and Addiction' program organized by the European Yoga Fellowship (EYF). Over 100 yoga teachers, health professionals and workshop facilitators, including Swami Savitananda and Mike Hartog, Netherlands, Sannyasis Indradev and Achyutananda, UK, Dr Sannyasi Swaroopmurti, Czech Republic, Sannyasi Paramatma, France, Swami Mahimananda and Sannyasi Kriyamurti, Australia, contributed at this event.

Swamiji also gave public lectures at Zindis College and the Goethe Institute in Athens. A Sannyasa Festival attended by over 400 sannyasins from UK, Spain, Italy, France, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Holland, Russia, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Romania, Yugoslavia, Australia, South Africa, Sweden and Greece was held. Swami Prakashananda from Germany, Swamis Vedantananda and Satyaprakash, Sannyasis Achyutananda and Mudita from UK, Swamis Anandananda and Ishananda from Italy assisted with these programs.

On his return from the European tour, Swami Niranjanananda shared his impressions of the mood in Europe during a satsang with sannyasins at Sri Niwas, the sixth floor sanctuary, while the sun set in glorious hues over the waters of the Ganga.

He mentioned that a very different feeling was emerging in Europe with regard to yoga. The motivation to learn yoga as a

physical routine is finished, he said. Yoga is increasingly becoming a part of society, and yoga centres in Europe need to professionalize and create an accreditation system for yoga teachers though, at the same time, the tradition and the lineage must be maintained. Yoga is no longer a fringe culture. There is a growing interest in making it a part of professional life and integrating its techniques into society. Throughout Europe, he was asked again and again questions on higher dimensions of yoga by practitioners who were becoming more aware of their own aspirations and



limitations, and seeking to overcome them. His answers indicated how yoga can help us recognize and express our inner strength and maturity.

Swamiji spent a considerable time in Greece on his trip, getting to know the people. “They are very simple, innocent and sensitive but,” he joked, “if they are convinced, then you become their Alexander!”

In fact, there was a strong emotional fervour in Greece as many aspirants finally met Swami Niranjan for the first time in person. We can ask Swami Sivamurti, who first met him in 1978, what her first impression was of Swami Niranjan, Swami Satyananda’s bridge into the future, and what she considers most significant in these meetings. She has a long span of experience and training, and it seems this maturity of the guru-disciple relationship has enabled her to guide many people safely along the path. So, Swami Sivamurti, your first impressions?

Understanding

“It was the year 1978. All the passengers from the international jet liner had disembarked, and yet Swami Niranjan was not among them. I checked my papers to be sure that I was meeting the correct flight. Yes, all was in order, he should have been there, but he wasn’t. Around me people were greeting and hugging each other after long years of separation before slowly wandering out to their awaiting vehicles. The once crowded airport was suddenly desolate. He was nowhere to be seen.

I started to recall Swami Satyananda’s words about his visit over and over again. Yes, he must have been on that flight, I would have to start looking for him. I found an Olympic Airlines official and asked him if he had seen anyone dressed in geru robes, an unusual dress in Athens. He asked another official, who asked another and yet another. Eventually, one of these men came up and informed me that such a person had been on the flight. I showed them all the papers I had which agreed to Swami Niranjan’s entry into Greece for a period of time. All were duly stamped by the numerous officials. After a lot of explaining and convincing, they finally agreed that he could enter the country, provided I took complete responsibility.

I waited. Four hours passed, again it was quiet, and then the moment came, he was there a few metres in front of me, young, tall, radiant, standing wearing a geru poncho and a geru dhoti around his head. I remember clearly the first moment I saw him. I can recall it any time. Then he smiled, and I went to greet him and to welcome him to Greece. There is an old saying that it is the first impression which counts and bears great importance. Well, that first impression was of colour, warmth, radiance, strength, playfulness, and an iron will, and most of all, that here



is one who understands. We were ushered into a waiting car and driven to the hotel where a lecture was scheduled for that same evening. Thus began my first days with Swami Niranjan.

I asked him once what in his opinion was the highest virtue an individual could have. His answer was one word – understanding. This word I connected with him when I first saw him, and I still

connect it with him today. He is an individual who can put himself in another person’s position immediately and speak to them according to their needs. And what is more beautiful than to be with someone who understands you? Words are not necessary, explanations are uncalled for, as the other person simply knows what needs to be known, can say just the right word at the right time to heal you, lift you, enable you to stand on your own two feet again. There were times when we were together, and when he spoke to me, when I felt that through his eyes, Sri Swamiji

was looking, that through his lips, Sri Swamiji was speaking, that through him being there, Sri Swamiji was also there.

In those days the ashram was very small. Swami Niranjan immediately settled himself into the changing room, he didn’t complain, he didn’t ask for a bed, for we didn’t even have any beds, he just settled himself in and adapted, adjusted and



accommodated himself. He asked for nothing and accepted what came. He requested no special food, nothing, he just fitted in because he understood.

In looking back, it was not the official times we spent together, where he delivered lectures, held satsangs, gave seminars, met people, gave interviews, etc., although these always had everyone spellbound, but it is the unofficial moments I recall, when we just spent time together. Sometimes he was very serious, withdrawn, appearing to be in another space, at other times we played, toured and had so much fun just laughing with life. The people of Greece responded both to his mental prowess and his fun-loving side.



Later we went to Zinal in Switzerland where he conducted a Kriya Yoga Seminar for the European and French Federations of Yoga. They were teachers who had been teaching for 15 to 20 years, maybe more. They were waiting to learn Kriya Yoga. What did Swami Niranjan teach them? Pawanmuktasana, and they loved it. It was totally unfamiliar to them, and they had the most enjoyable yoga seminar of their lives. They certainly left smiling, and with a fresh outlook on what yoga was all about.

In between classes we went climbing up mountains. Swamiji always chose the highest to climb, and then at breakneck speed he would begin the descent, I was trying to keep up with him. At the bottom of the mountain, when the rest of us were gasping

for air, he would suggest a game of tennis, then on the way back to the room, with just minutes to spare before the next class, he would sight a volley ball game and join in that. Every moment of the day was filled with energy and activity, not a single second was wasted, making me think of those lines of Rudyard Kipling, 'If you can fill the unforgiving minute with 60 seconds worth of distance run, yours is the earth, and everything that's in it, and what is more you'll be a man, my son.'

That was his first visit, but since then, so many people have had to wait such a long time to meet Swami Niranjan. Many had waited for over 20 years in Greece and the neighbouring Balkan countries to see their guru in person. This long wait only added to

the magic of the event, which began as soon as Swamiji entered Greece and greeted us all with his joyful smile and laughter. He arrived at Satyanandashram, Paiania, just as the sun was setting over Mt Hymettos, to a greeting from sannyasins holding lighted candles to symbolize the light entering the ashram. That was the first moment in a time of enchantment for all whose lives he touched while he stayed with us. Vedic and ancient Greek customs were combined in the candle-lit welcome, the Greek side involving an offering of water, to ensure that all runs smoothly and sweets to ensure that all is sweet.

Swamiji did not stand on ceremony, but that same evening began his daily walks around the ashram grounds, to see first-hand what was going on with the last minute preparations. This immediately inspired all those who had been working for



many months for his visit. The ashram was beautiful. It was ablaze with many spring flowers, which had blossomed early to welcome Swamiji to Paiania. The grass was a vivid green, which is a great feat of accomplishment in such a dry land. The tents were brightly decorated, and all the areas where the programs were to be held were receiving their final touches.

What is it I remember most after such a momentous time? There was Swamiji's laughter, his spirit of good will which pervaded the ashram and inspired us all, his generosity of spirit on every level: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. It was a time of cooperation and teamwork; work became seva and was coloured by harmony, joy and unity.

Swamiji met with the children and they invited him to their room for tea and asked him questions, many of which showed more depth than the questions asked by adults. They also played music for him and shared some jokes. A special event for us all was the time of the initiations. The age-old mantras mixed with sweet smelling incense as people dedicated their lives to sannyasa and the mission and tradition of the guru.

Another highlight was enacting the plays of Diogenes (an ancient Greek sadhaka) who searched all his life, with a lighted lantern in his hand, for a real human being. It was reputed that he would only blow the lantern out when he had met a true human being. In our play he found this opportunity upon meeting Swami Niranjan, and at last blew out his lantern. Swami Satyananda always said it is very easy to be a guru, a leader, a pontiff or such, but it is very, very difficult to be a human being, because to be human, one has to have killed everything inside so that one is empty; only then the purest consciousness flows through.

From Swami Niranjan emanates a love and compassion that reaches out to all. He has the ability to meet each individual on their level and assure them that they are special to him. Being with him I saw this happen so many times, in so many ways, on so many occasions. During these days, when the heart overflowed, and when words were no longer of any use to express our feelings, there was nothing left to do but to follow the custom of this country and dance. And so we danced and Swamiji danced



also. Then he was crowned with an olive wreath, which was the symbol of victory in ancient Greece. The victory he won was the hearts of the Greek people."

From the beginning, the mood in Europe concerned investigating new areas where yoga can dynamically improve the chances of people struggling in life. At different locations throughout the year, Swamiji continued to inspire the people dedicated to applying yogic techniques positively within society to share their insights, experience and expertise. In Greece he commented:

Research into yoga and addiction

"Most of the research in which yoga practices have been applied to overcome different forms of addiction has several common

principles. The common practices are asana and pranayama, which lead to vitality of the body and brain; the techniques of deep relaxation which aim to relax the inner agitations of the mind; some of the techniques of pratyahara which help to focus the mind; and some of the more advanced techniques to analyze the expressions of the mind.

These investigations into the effects of yoga on addiction are invaluable for our body of knowledge. However, one point modern researchers have missed is the depth of compulsion and obsession in the personality, which alters the desires and

behaviour. Investigations carried out in the USA and India indicate that where there is a heavy dependence on alcohol, dynamic asanas can be used to overcome that dependence. Where there is a desire to stop smoking marijuana, gentle yogic techniques can be used to create a change.

In our investigations, we looked at the degree of obsessiveness in the personality before teaching people yoga. We adopted different approaches for a growing personality and an established personality. This can act as a reference point for further research into yoga, because right now we are using

the same sledgehammer to hit all kinds of addictions. Light addictions only need a gentle hammer whereas heavy addictions need maybe a 20-pound sledgehammer.

If we follow the principle that says fight fire with fire, poison with poison, then accordingly we have to fight addiction with addiction. The so-called negative addictions can be easily managed through positive addictions. Therefore, let us become addicted to the joys of life and appreciate life. We are always influenced by the negative addictions; from today, let us be influenced by positive addictions."



Sannyasi Atmatattwa sent a report on the convention in Wales, and I mentioned it to a news-hungry friend, newly returned from working in the Akhara in Rikhia.

"It was hosted by Swami Atmapoorna in Padmasambhava in Llandeilo, Wales." I began.

"Strange name for a Satyananda Yoga centre," she interrupted.

"It's named after the bodhisattwa who founded a branch of Tibetan Buddhism around the 7th century," I said.

"It was about how yoga can help in fighting addiction again, wasn't it? Swamiji seems to be taking that really seriously, it was the main theme in France before."

"Yes, he seems particularly interested in how yoga can help people find out the causes of their addiction – whatever it is; I mean, it doesn't have to be drugs. We've all got an addiction."

"Or two," she responded laconically.

"But I gather this convention was broader in scope and there were a lot of plans made for further research. The proceedings were guided by Swamiji and, according to Atmatattwa's report, people involved with education, counselling, drug addiction, prisons, rehabilitation and yoga met to discover and implement more practical steps to use the techniques of yoga in the framework of society. People no longer want the benefits of yoga merely for themselves, they want to share and apply their knowledge, knowing it can help relieve the sufferings of others."

Multidimensional yoga

"Swami Niranjanananda flew to the UK to conduct a seminar on 'Applications of Yoga in the New Millennium' in the heart of a national park in the Welsh Hills where Buckland Hall, once a stately home, is now a retreat and conference centre. During the event, each day had specific themes that were practical, down to earth and highly relevant to the needs within today's society. Invited guests included educationalists, mental health workers and drug and alcohol counsellors from local prisons. As some programs ran

simultaneously, the choice of which lecture or workshop to attend was quite difficult for the discerning delegate.

In addition to the lectures and workshops, there was an open forum where Swami Nirajan and the day's speakers answered questions on the day's topics. Swami Nirajan's daily satsang sessions covered a wide range of subjects including directives for yoga teachers, visions of the potential applications of yoga both now and in the future, death, the purpose of kirtan as a yogic practice and the responsibilities that should be considered by those thinking of initiation, into mantra or some level of sannyasa.



The early morning meditation classes and asana classes led by Swamis Pragyamurti, Vedantananda, Shantamurti, Chetanmurti and Chinmayarupa, displayed the wide range of teachers working in the UK and Eire. During the first day, with the theme 'Applications of Yoga in Mental Health', there was a workshop from Swami Vedantananda called 'Post Travel Yoga',

after which Dr Rishi Vivekananda lectured on 'Managing Stress with Yoga'. At the same time, Dr Serena Roney-Dougal held a workshop looking at recent scientific research into the yogic chakra system. She was joined by Swami Nirajan and both asked and answered questions. Next door, Swami Sivamurti led a profound session on inner silence, the path to self-knowledge.

After tea there was a choice of workshops to attend: Swami Satyaprakash and Amarajyoti's 'Teaching Yoga to People with Mental Health Difficulties', Swami Mantrasiddhi's 'Yoga and Emotional Health', or Swami Ishananda from Italy, sharing her experiences teaching 'Passive Yoga for the Mentally and Physically Disabled'. The MC, Swami Pragyamurti, welcomed the guests of honour, Faye Beddowes, representing the British Wheel of Yoga, and Jenny Randerson, an MP who spoke on health, education and ecological issues within her constituency, and how yoga could provide a positive contribution to Welsh society.

Swami Nirajan clarified and explained the difference between the tradition of sannyasa to which he belongs, and yoga, which many sannyasins happen to teach and gave a visual presentation outlining the lineage, background history and contributions of Satyananda Yoga, and some of the current work taking place in India. Sian James sang delightful traditional Welsh songs, short kirtan followed, then people got into their cars, vans and minibuses and made their ways to the numerous cottages, farms, education centres and bunkhouses rented nearby to accommodate the delegates.

A choice of four excellent morning classes started on Friday. Heavy showers poured down for the first part of the day, 'cleansing the environment and providing negative ions for us' according to Swami Nirajan. The daily theme was 'Applications of Yoga in Education and Special Needs'. All the main speakers gave a lecture in the morning, followed by a more in-depth workshop in the afternoon. Swami Yogabhakti, founder of RYE, Paris, gave a most inspiring lecture on 'Yoga at School' and Dr Ulrike Luedtke (Swami Chandrajyoti) from Germany lectured and gave a very dynamic workshop on 'Yoga in Special Education'.

Swami Nischalananda, founder of Mandala Yoga Ashram in Wales, inspired a packed room with his lucid lecture and practical, hands-on session about yogic physiology and the pancha koshas, the five layers or dimensions of the human being, whilst Tattwagyani gave guidance for setting up a yoga centre and Swami Anandananda elucidated in-depth on the benefits of relaxation for people with different needs. Dr Inge Friedrich-Rust's (Sannyasi Divyadrishti) interesting topic was



'Yogic Psychology, Coping with the Challenges of Everyday Life', while Mary Madhavi gave an effervescent lecture and workshop on working with yoga and disabilities. Swami Savitananda from the Netherlands lectured on chakras and talas, the lower chakras, and their relevance in our lives.

The family weekend began and the sounds of over 40 children added flavour to the proceedings. Parents, volunteers

and teachers alike provided an array of different activities and games throughout the weekend, enabling other grateful parents to attend the programs.

Saturday's theme was 'Applying Yoga in Prisons and Special Needs'. The main speakers were Sandy Chubb, advocate of yoga and meditation within the prison systems of UK and Eire, and Director of the Prison Phoenix Trust, an Oxford based charity which actively supports thousands of prisoners, and Annabel Tame, who is involved in introducing yoga into Canadian prisons. Both support the training given to Satyananda Yoga teachers and seemed pleased to forge a stronger link. Dr Françoise Freedman, a medical anthropologist and founder of Birthlight, a group that specializes in yoga and pregnancy; Nerissa Fields, a psychiatric nurse who works with yoga and relaxation for learning difficulties; Swami Dayamurti (Doriell Hall) who held a workshop on chakras, Lalitambika and Swami Shantamurti who work with people with learning difficulties and special groups, all shared their knowledge. Again there was a stimulating and thought-provoking forum and after another superb dinner, the day ended with satsang and kirtan as the sun set over the hills.

Sunday's theme was 'Applications of Yoga in Health'. The European Yoga Fellowship (EYF) gave a presentation on their work over the last two years in the field of 'Yoga and Addiction', while Rishi Hridayananda showed highlights of the Yoga Academy in Australia on video and Swami Siddhartha from Milan, outlined some of the charitable work in the poorer areas of Bihar with a video produced by her centre, 'Sivananda Math – An Experience of Love'.

Lunch on the grass outside in the Sunday sunshine was followed by either a meditation with Swami Sivamurti, or time spent strolling among the lush grounds simply relaxing, with many exchanges of notes and postal and e-mail addresses taking place between old and new friends; informal networking of the best kind. Every day was packed full of activity with a vibrant natural flow of movement throughout the house and grounds, combining an overall mood of abundance and joy with the more

studious aspects of how to apply yoga in society. A spontaneous team of karma yogis from many countries pulled together to ensure that all the background running (driving, cleaning, food serving, etc.) went without a hitch.

In the closing ceremony, Swami Atmapoorna, from Padmasambhava, thanked everyone for coming, many from so very far, and expressed his gratitude towards the crew, helpers and above all to Swami Niranjan. All who attended this almost magical event left



feeling recharged with their hearts, minds and bodies filled with joy, renewed inspiration and a sense of community through yoga."

"Impressive isn't it?"

"Truly. Swami Satyananda has hailed the new millennium as the age of bhakti, the time for selfless devotion and, when you hear things like these and meet the people coming for the courses and celebrations in Munger and Rikhia, it seems true."

“Yes, or when you travel outside to the yoga centres, it seems that the work that Swami Niranjan and the sannyasins and yoga teachers are engaged in creates, well, an outpouring of a sense of goodness, of the rightness of things. People do get inspired while living in the ashram all right, they want to transform their lives, but we have to work to set things in place outside the immediate sphere of the guru’s influence, and it’s the working yoga teachers who do that.”

“Yes, it’s as though people have decided to rise to the challenge and demonstrate how the teachings of yoga, you know, the broad yoga – full spectrum Bihar Yoga – can transform our daily lives. And that’s what it will take to make possible this vision of ‘peace, prosperity, plenty and spiritual upliftment’ taking place in the whole of mankind.”

We’ve been seeing Swami Atmabhishek’s name everywhere in the last several years as he tours giving seminars and yoga camps to students, the army and the business sector, in fact, to anyone asking for yoga programs it seems. So when he was called to Ganga Darshan we were interested to hear something of the experiences that had generated such commitment. He said there were so many experiences that he had been thinking of writing them down, and he shared this one.

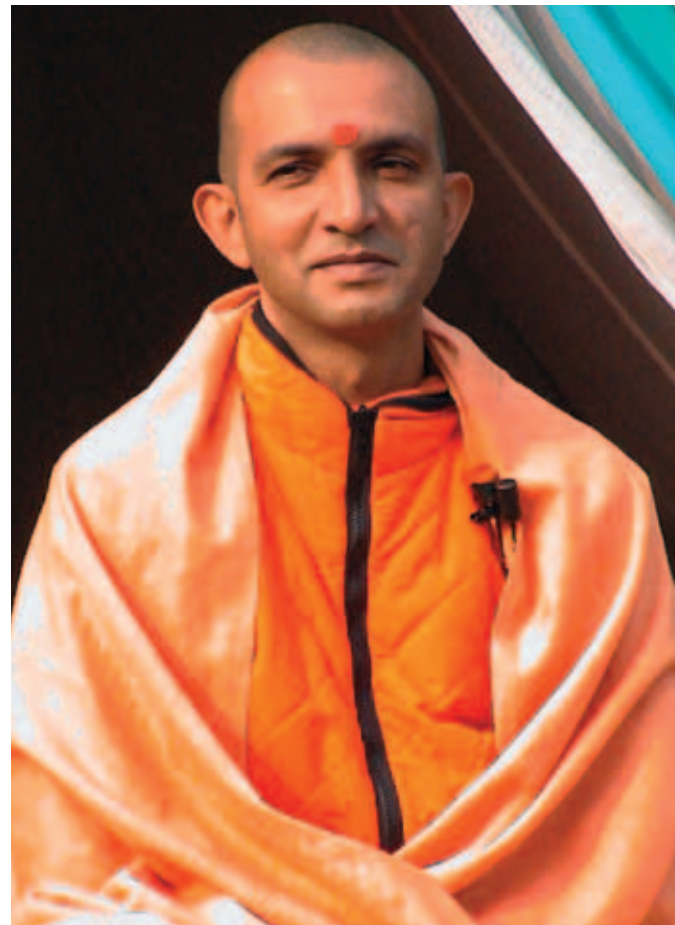
Divinity personified

“This incident took place during the Yajna in 1999. My youngest daughter Nina was to get married a day after Basant Panchami in the year 2000. In May 1983 she had participated in a month’s children’s course in Ganga Darshan, where about 400 children from all over the country took part. I advised her that she should visit Rikhia to obtain the blessings of Sri Swamiji before marriage.

As she was employed as an engineer she could not get long leave, so she decided to visit Rikhia for a few days only. I reached Rikhia before the event started and stayed in a hotel at Deoghar, as there was no facility for stay at the ashram in those days. Nina and my elder sister Kamla, reached Deoghar later and stayed with me. My sister is initiated by Swami Shivom Tirtha, disciple

of Swami Vishnu Tirtha, a very well-known saint of Shaktipat Parampara from Dewas (MP).

We three reached the Rikhia ashram in the early morning, a day after their arrival at Deoghar. I wanted to introduce them to Swami Niranjan somehow, but could not succeed. I



was seated on the left side of Swami Satyananda’s seat, on the ground along with other sannyasins. My sister and daughter, being in plain clothes, were seated quite a distance away.

While sitting there, I was constantly thinking about how to introduce my sister and daughter to Swami Niranjan. But

because of, and to maintain, the management and discipline of the place, I just could not do anything. After sometime, I noticed that Swamiji was walking down towards the spot where they were seated. He stood near them for a few moments. Then I saw both of them getting up and saying something to him. A few moments later, Swamiji turned and started walking back, while they both followed him.

I was wonderstruck and could not believe my eyes. How could this happen? Swamiji took them to Sri Swamiji. They both offered their pranams to him. While doing so, my sister told Sri Swamiji that she is a disciple of Swami Shivom Tirtha. Sri Swamiji immediately said, ‘Yes, I know.’ And gestured for her to sit where I was sitting. Accordingly she came and sat beside me and my daughter went back to her place.

Now my sister was pleasantly shocked to find that she (being in plain clothes) had been asked to sit among sannyasins. After some time, when she calmed down, I asked her about what happened there a little while ago. She said, ‘I was naturally very keen to have Sri Swamiji’s darshan from close range. So not finding any other way out, I prayed to my guruji for help. After the prayer, as soon as I opened my eyes, I found Swami Niranjan standing near me, and I requested him to help me to have darshan of Sri Swamiji. On hearing my words, he said, ‘I have come here to take you there.’ He turned around and went back to Sri Swamiji, asking both of us to follow.’

After this revelation, the story was complete, but I was stunned and my brain virtually froze for a few moments and I began to question, ‘How can all this happen the way it has happened while the fact is I could not introduce them to Swamiji?’

After thinking over the matter subsequently, I concluded that saints and sages are nothing but divinity personified, and their strengths and reach are infinite. Only they know how, when and on whom they are going to bestow their grace, and in what form. We mortals, the devotees, have only one choice and that is to strive to have faith in them. Once we can do that, everything falls into place and all the odds are taken away.”

The Vision of BYB

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Society has had different needs at different times. Initially, people came to yoga with a spiritual aim in mind. Then, in the seventies, there was a change of mentality as yoga found increasing acceptance in the scientific community; scientists and intellectuals started studying and investigating yoga, and people started coming to yoga for therapy. In the eighties there was another shift when people started coming to yoga not only for therapy, but also to become teachers of yoga, to make a profession out of yoga.

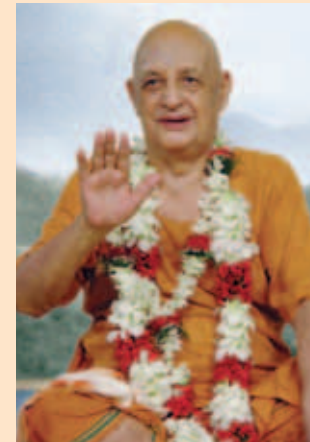
In the nineties there was another shift. Although there was a big section of people who were still happy following the common practices of yoga, at the same time another section of people now wanted to study yoga in-depth. A need developed for an institution where the whole range of the subject of yoga could be studied in a yogic environment, where one could go deep into the subject and master it. This was felt very strongly during the World Yoga Convention held at Munger in 1993. The Governor of Bihar first made this idea public. He said that instead of calling this institution Bihar School of Yoga, we should call it Bihar Yoga University, because it is a university where yogic life, yogic principles and the entire subject of yoga can be learnt by those who have the capacity.

So Bihar Yoga Bharati was formed as an extension of Bihar School of Yoga. Both these institutions are extensions of Sri Swamiji's yogic mission, which is to know yoga and live yoga with proper discipline and *maryada*, a righteous, balanced and harmonious approach.

When we thought of making this conversion to a yogic university, there was a definite feeling that this establishment has to be different from others. Although it will be an academic institution, there has to be a feeling for and an understanding of yoga which is also non-academic. And we realized that this can be

achieved by trying to live a certain lifestyle. Therefore, the concept of Bihar Yoga Bharati is a place where yoga can be learned in-depth and also lived at the same time. Just knowing about something is not the ultimate understanding, but living it is.

Bihar Yoga Bharati aims at providing the right samskara for imbibing education. Education has to be imbibed; it cannot be learnt through books. It cannot be learnt from a teacher in a one-hour lecture, a one-hour practical session of yoga. It can only be learnt by each one of us making an effort to be open in our interactions, and also by applying what we learn in a classroom in practical life.



Ganga Darshan is a gurukul. It is not just an ashram or a university. This is a very important point for students to understand. In a gurukul you live for some time changing your pattern of thought and lifestyle, and being open and receptive. The gurukul represents a tradition of visionaries. It is a spiritual environment where the vision of the guru can unfold. The spirit behind BYB is the sankalpa of many generations, starting with Swami Sivananda, who envisioned that yoga would emerge as the need of society at large. He was not a preacher or teacher, but an inspirer who had a mission and a vision. The mission was to introduce people to

the divine life, which is at the opposite end of the spectrum of material life.

Swami Sivananda believed that it is the birthright of everyone to experience spirituality in a practical form, in action, speech and thought, in all life's situations. He made the components of karma yoga and bhakti yoga relevant to one's life, realizing that the combination of action and emotion would help one develop spiritually. In order to develop spiritually, emotions have to be channelled in the right direction. In order to achieve success, actions have to be directed constructively and creatively. So, the two components of karma and bhakti have to be developed in order to experience wholeness, which is the indication of spiritual realization in life.

The yoga philosophy expounded by Swami Sivananda was further developed by Swami Satyananda into a system that is now being recognized as the holistic approach of Satyananda Yoga or Bihar Yoga. Swami Satyananda structured the vision of Swami Sivananda, the philosophy, practices, applications and lifestyle, into a practical and scientific system. He did not focus on yoga as a practice, not on any particular branch of yoga such as hatha yoga, raja yoga, meditation yoga, kundalini yoga or kriya yoga, but developed a holistic or integral yoga system, where the tools to fine-tune all the different aspects of the personality can be found, rather than focusing on the expansion of one particular area. He developed a system through which we can harmonize and improve the efficiency of our head, heart and hands – intellect, emotions and actions.

Swami Satyananda had certain experiences and realizations about human nature, the human mind, the direction that human society is taking and the aim of life. He found that the most practical and philosophical practice that a person could undertake was yoga. Religions provide philosophical guidelines, but the training, teaching and wisdom needed to convert that philosophy into practice, into a process which can lead towards fulfilment and wholeness,

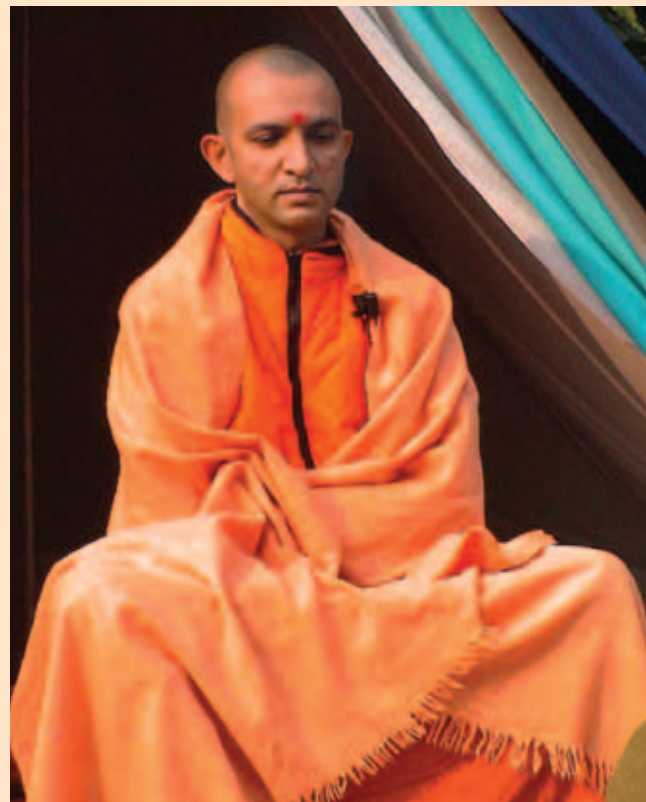
was lacking. Yoga provided a practical method by which one could attain certain basic disciplines in life in order to experience the wholeness of human personality.

Swami Satyananda made the propagation of yoga his mission due to his understanding of human nature and also the mandate given to him by his guru. He had the vision that with the practice of yoga one can develop understanding. Understanding is the greatest human quality. If there is any human quality we can define as the link between the transcendental and the mundane, it is not kindness, compassion or love, it is not being good and doing good, it is only understanding.

This understanding plays many different roles. It can be practical and material, spiritual and philosophical, or intellectual, rational and intuitive. Understanding means that we know the reality in terms of cause and effect, right and wrong, good and bad, positive and negative. This knowledge is understanding. It is not intellectual knowledge, but understanding and living the knowledge. To awaken this faculty of understanding through the practices of yoga was the vision of Swami Satyananda.

BYB is guided by these visions. Not only BYB, but the entire yoga movement established by Swami Satyananda aims at only one point, one idea, one belief. If you take it personally, begin to understand yourself, adjust and adapt, and live in accordance with the principles of dharma. Think in a dharmic, uplifting, enriching and positive way. If you take it socially, live according to those principles which make you a light in society. As yoga students or even as sannyasins, we may not have been aware of these visions and inspirations, but today I am telling each and every one who is here, whether new or long-term, that the environment of Ganga Darshan and the teaching imparted here, whether in the form of classroom training in yoga or philosophy, in satsang or through actions, has one aim.

Ganga Darshan came into existence after two generations of thinking and planning. In the third generation, Bihar Yoga Bharati has come into existence. Between the two poles of birth



and death, movement and development is an ongoing process. Development entails change, change entails acceptance, acceptance entails adjustment and adaptation, and all these are ongoing processes at every level. One has to grow into them to acquire a state of equipoise. And growing into the state of equipoise is the training we are trying to impart in Ganga Darshan through BYB. The three recognized aspects of yoga – physical, mental and spiritual – have been given the form of three faculties. Yoga Philosophy represents the spiritual aspect of yoga, Yoga Psychology represents the mental aspect, and Applied Yoga represents the physical aspect. These are the three dimensions of yoga which we are looking at and trying to develop as it was when yoga was practised in the right atmosphere.

So, although Bihar School of Yoga conducts yoga training, yoga seminars, yoga conferences and conventions in different parts of Bihar, India and the world, and Bihar Yoga Bharati is bringing yoga to the academic level, the lifestyle is based on the ideals of sannyasa. The entire system, discipline and lifestyle are based on the principles of sannyasa. That tradition has to be kept alive. Though we are teachers of yoga, as sannyasins of the Saraswati tradition, yoga is not our path. Our path is Vedanta, jnana. However, we have made jnana into our personal pursuit in life, and yoga as the main pursuit in life, in order to contribute to society. Therefore, combining yoga with sannyasa life will be and should be encouraged.

BYB is unique in the sense that it is the first spiritual university recognized by the Department of Education in India, and the first in the world as well. Sri Swamiji has said that in this modern age the status of BYB is the same as Nalanda, Takshashila and Vikramshila, the ancient universities that flourished in Bihar. The BYB system of education represents something very special in this journey of life – a trust that you could and should live yoga in your life. The degree you receive is only a piece of paper, but as a yoga practitioner, appreciate the trust placed in you. Usually when people receive their certificate, they think they have become what the certificate states. That is not the right attitude in yoga, because the certificate only represents the culmination of a part of the studies. Receiving a certificate is only the beginning of an independent yogic journey. It should become an inspiration to experience and live what one has learned. How one is able to integrate yoga and the yogic concepts in one's life will decide one's mastery of the subject of yoga. The real degree in yoga is cultural, spiritual and academic – all three. This degree represents your inclination to live and believe in a lifestyle and idea which is transcendental and yogic. So the certificate does not suggest that one has become something. It only indicates that the individual yogic life is starting, and from this point onwards, you are your own teacher and your own student. That is what one has to remember. ॐ



January

On the 2nd, Swami Niranjana inaugurated Satyananda Yoga Sadhana Kendra, Bariarpur.

On the 6th, Swamiji addressed a District Conference of Rotary International in Varanasi.

Sannyasi Maheshwarcharya, Vedvrat, Sunil and Ashish from BYMM conducted classes and assisted Swami Satyadharma and Dr Swami Nirmalananda with programs in Mumbai.

Swami Atmabhishek conducted camps organized by the Bastar Transport Association in Jagdalpur from the 7th to 14th; at Satyananda Yoga Ashram, Gondia, from the 16th to 23rd, and for Satyananda Yoga Kendra, Noida, at Kendriya Vihar Community Centre from 22nd February to 8th March.

From the 15th to 21st, a Children's Yoga Course was conducted for students from Saraswati Vidya Mandir at Rajgir by BYMM propagators.

Swami Sumitrananda conducted a program from the 21st to 27th at Atma Darshan, Patna.

Basant Panchami was celebrated at Ganga Darshan from the 27th to 29th with satsang and havan, under Swami Niranjana's guidance.

February

Swami Sanyam and Roopnath Sahu conducted a camp on the 1st at the Telephone Exchange, Rajnandgaon.

From the 2nd to 9th, Swami Niranjana was in Pune and Mumbai. From the 5th to 9th, he conducted a program organized by the Satyananda Yoga Centre, Mumbai, at the J.J. School of Arts and gave mantra diksha. He gave satsang at the Mumbai Police Club, at the Fine Arts Cultural Centre, Chembur, and at the Arya Samaj Mandir Hall, Santa Cruz.

Yoga sessions were conducted by Swami Vigyanchaitanya at Arthur Road and Byculla Jails in central Mumbai and by Dr Swami Nirmalananda for female inmates at Arthur Road Jail.

An HMC was conducted by Swami Nityachaitanya at BSY, Rikhia, from the 3rd to 20th February.

Swami Anandakumar conducted teacher training courses in Bangalore from 5th February to 18th March and from 26th February to 30th March.

On the 16th, Swamis Sumitrananda and Suryapremananda and Jignasu Vyomanada spoke at the Rotary Club, Bhagalpur.

Swami Satyananda Yogashramam, Chennai, conducted a health camp for the rural poor on the 18th, yoga camps on the 20th, 22nd and 23rd at Gitanjali, Satavahana and Chaitanya Public Schools, a program for Coromandel Fertilizers Ltd, Hyderabad, on the 26th and 27th, and a yoga camp for the aged on the 28th.

March

A yoga camp organized by Satyananda Ashram, Rajnandgaon, was held on the 1st at Khanarpuri village by Jignasu Yogarjuna.



From the 1st to 5th, Swami Niranjan was in Ranchi for the Jharkhand Yoga Mahotsav.

Swami Atmabhishek conducted a seminar at IIT, New Delhi, from the 2nd to 8th March sponsored by SPIC-MACAY, and seminars from 11th to 18th March and 20th to 27th May at the Officer's Club, IOC Refinery, Panipat.

Swami Bhaktichaitanya, Swami Satyananda Yoga Ashramam, Chennai, conducted programs for college lecturers, for children, parents and teachers, and for diabetes, BP and obesity in March, June and November.

A yoga camp was held at SAI Western Centre, Gandhinagar, from the 12th to 18th by Swami Maheshananda and Sannyasi Harigyanam.

From the 14th to 25th, Swami Niranjan toured Bhubaneswar, Puri, Ahmedabad, Bhuj and Kolkata.

Swami Niranjan led a Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA) program from 30th March to 1st April at Ganga Darshan, coordinated by Swami Shankarananda, Dr Gautam Sahay and Alok Agrawal.

Swami Yogakanti conducted seminars in March and April in Australia and in May in Kolkata.

Swami Satyadharma assisted the European Yoga Academy (EYA) in March and conducted seminars in Greece, Italy and France. In June she worked with the Satyananda Yoga Academy in Australia. In September she conducted seminars for the Satyananda Yoga Centre in Cleveland, Ohio, USA, and in October in New Zealand. Sannyasis Srimukhananda and Harikripa conducted classes for Spring Dale Senior School, Amritsar, at Hamira, Jaisalmer, Rajasthan, from 11th to 18th, and at the school from the 2nd to 10th April.

April

In Vijayawada, AP, Swami Bhaktichaitanya conducted a seminar at Mahatma Gandhi Arogya Kendra on the 1st, children's camps from 17th to 23rd and 24th to 30th, and a program for senior citizens from the 25th to 29th.

Sannyasi Srimukhananda conducted a program at J.K. White Cement, Gotan, Rajasthan, from the 17th to 23rd.

Swami Niranjan visited Australia from the 4th to 18th, conducting

programs at Rocklyn, Alice Springs, Sydney and Mangrove Mountain.

Swami Atmabhishek conducted a camp at Motihari YMM from the 7th to 15th and a session for doctors on the 15th at the request of the Indian Medical Association.

May

A children's camp was conducted by Rinzhim and Annapurna from BYMM at Satyananda Ashram, Rajnandgaon, from the 1st to 10th.

Swami Bhaktichaitanya conducted three programs for school children in Vijayawada, AP.

Swami Atmabhishek conducted a camp organised by ACC's Gagal Cement Works in Barmana, HP, from the 10th to 17th.



Satyananda Yoga Centre, Pune, conducted programs for school teachers from the 11th to 16th and from the 18th to 23rd for the Maharashtra State Council of Educational Research and Training (MSCERT).

Swami Niranjan was in Spain for a program organized by the Barcelona School of Yoga from the 17th to 21st.

Swami Sanyam conducted a program for ITC, Kolkata, from the 20th to 26th, organized by Sannyasis Shivapratap and Brahmavidya.

Satyananda Yoga Centre, Mumbai, organized a five-day workshop and a retreat on the 27th with Dr Swami Nirmalananda.

Satyananda Yoga Kendra, Jabalpur, conducted a children's camp from the 22nd to 31st.

On the 23rd, at the invitation of the GOC-in-C Western Command, Lt.



Gen. Surjeet Singh, Swami Niranjan visited the Western Command Headquarters, Chandimandir, Chandigarh. Swami Vigyanachaitanya, Sannyasi Harigyanam and Jignasu Sridharana conducted camps there from 24th to 31st and at the Central Ordnance Department, Chheoki, Allahabad, from 4th to 10th June.

A yoga camp was held from 25th May to 5th June at Kondagaon YMM.

On the 27th, BYB students visited Paramahansa Alakh Bara, Rikhia, to receive the blessings of Swami Satyananda.

BYMM conducted a children's yoga course for 6,000 children at the Polo Ground, Munger, from 31st May to 4th June.



June

BYMM Propagators conducted a program with Satyam Seva Kendra, Kolkata, from the 1st to 9th.

A training program for education officials from SPEED (State Program for Elementary Education Development), Patna, was held from the 4th to 10th at Ganga Darshan by Swamis Shankarananda, Gyanbhikshu and Yogavijaya and Kumar Purushottam.

A course was held at SBI, Patna, from the 12th to 19th by Swami Anandakumar, assisted by Sannyasi Ashutosh.

Swami Atmabhishek conducted a yoga camp from 13th to 19th at Rishilok Colony, Rishikesh.

At Satyam Seva Kendra, Kolkata, on the 14th, a video on yoga in prisons was shown to the Parliamentary Committee. On the 22nd, Sannyasi Rishiputra spoke on yoga at RPG Cable and Telecom.

Swami Hrishikeshananda, Satyam Om Yoga Vidyalaya, Bilaspur, conducted classes at CMPDI Colony, Bilaspur, from the 14th to 20th.

July

Guru Poornima was celebrated from the 3rd to 5th at Ganga Darshan. Swami Niranjan gave satsangs and conducted havan.

A one-year Sannyasa Training Course in Hindi commenced, supervised by Swami Niranjan, and conducted by Swamis Yogakanti, Kaivalyananda and Tyagraj.

On the 8th, Sannyasi Rishiputra spoke at Chinmaya Vanprasth Sansthan, Kolkata, and from the 23rd to 29th, Sannyasi Tapogyanam conducted classes at Sunny Park, Kolkata.

Swami Sanyam conducted a camp from the 15th to 22nd at Udaychal Bhavan, Rajnandgaon.

On the 21st, Swami Niranjan gave satsang at a state convention organized by SPICMACAY at Jamalpur.

Swami Bhaktichaitanya, Chennai, conducted programs from 21st to 25th July and from 19th to 23rd November.

Swami Yogakanti and Sannyasi Satyasandhan conducted a stress management course for the Govt of India's Ministerial Staff Training Unit, Patna, from the 23rd to 27th. Sri Prem Verma, Commissioner of Income Tax, Hazaribagh, and Sri N.K. Sharma,

Income Tax Officer, MSTU, Patna, organized the program.

On the 5th, Swami Niranjan inaugurated the Yoga Kendra, Hajipur, established by Dr Smt Vijayalakshmi. Members of the Patna High Court judiciary and senior advocates attended.

A seminar was conducted at BSY, Munger, from the 11th to 14th for women appointed as district level officers in Mahila Samakhya. The project was undertaken by the Bihar Education Project Council. Classes were conducted by Sannyasi Ritambhara, Anjali Sahoo, Lakshmi Chaudhary and BYB staff.

Swami Atmabhishek conducted programs on the 17th at the Directorate-General of Mines Safety, Dhanbad, at Patliputra Medical College from the 20th to 27th, and at Agrasen Bhavan, Purana Bazar, from the 21st to 27th.

Swami Niranjan was in Bokaro from 24th to 26th August for a convention held at Shanti Darshan Ashram, and in Dhanbad from 27th to 30th for a convention held at the Penman Hall of the Indian School of Mines.

September

Swami Niranjan conducted the annual program at Ganga Darshan from the 8th to 12th. Uma Devi (Sannyasi Rajeshwari) from Hyderabad conducted pooja for Ganapati, Gayatri, Lakshmi, Lalita and Chandi. After an introduction by Vice-Chancellor, Swami Shankarananda, talks were given by BYB lecturers from the departments of Yoga Psychology (Dr Sannyasi Yogasindhu, Dr Mridula Mishra and Mukesh Kumar Jha), Applied Yogic Science (Dr Swamis Mangalteertham and Nirmalananda and Rajeev Rajesh) and Yoga Philosophy (Swamis Gyanbhikshu, Yogakanti, Maheshananda and Prof Harishankar Singh) with final discourses by Swami Niranjan. Prof Ramashraya Yadav, Vice-Chancellor of TM Bhagalpur University, was the chief guest.

From the 12th to 18th, BYMM conducted classes for 5,000 children in 385 centres in Munger, Jamalpur, Bariarpur, Sitakund, Maheshpur, Nauagarhi, Itahari and Janakinagar for the 'Bihar Yoga: From the Ashram to the Rooftops of the Town' project.

On the 16th, Mahamandaleshwar Sri Swami Vidyanaanda Giri, Acharya of Kailash Ashram, Rishikesh, visited Ganga Darshan, accompanied by Sri Swami Ramananda from Agni Akhara, Varanasi.

Swami Gorakhnath conducted a camp organized by the Rotary Club of Sheikhpura Central at Sanjay Gandhi Memorial College from the 16th to 22nd. Sri Sanjay K. Singh, Bihar's Minister of State, Rural Development, inaugurated the program.

Swami Vigyanchaitanya and Sannyasi Tapogyanam conducted a program at Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy, Hyderabad, from the 24th to 28th.

From 24th September to 6th October, yoga teachers from Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Mumbai, attended a course at Ganga Darshan conducted by Dr Swami Mudraroop and BYB staff.

Swami Nirajan attended the National Yoga Satsang Samaroha from the 27th to 30th in Bolangir, Orissa, organized by Sannyasi Tejomayananda, Satyananda Yoga Vidyalaya, Bolangir. The Governor of Orissa, Sri M.M. Rajendran, inaugurated the program. Guests included Sri Gajapati Maharaj of Puri, Swami Gurusevananda of the Divine Life Society, and Baba Chaitanya Charan Das of Bolangir. Swamis Swaroopananda, Gyanbhikshu, Dharmadev and Asheshananda gave lectures and Smt Krishna Devigave recitals from Ramacharitamans. Swamiji gave satsangs in Bargarh and in the Mahanadi Coalfield Ltd auditorium, Burla.

October

Swami Vigyanchaitanya and Sannyasi Tapogyanam gave classes for JCOs and other ranks, for children from Kendriya Vidyalaya, and for senior officers and their families at the Army College of Electrical, Electronics and Mechanical Engineering, Secunderabad, from the 1st to 6th.

Swami Yogajyoti conducted classes from the 7th to 13th for students from the Regional Theology Centre, Patna.

Swami Tyagraj and Rashmi Ranjan conducted classes at Bongaigaon Refinery and Petrochemical Ltd from the 7th to 15th, and at Delhi Public School, Dhaligaon.

Swami Atmabhishek conducted a camp from the 8th to 15th at the YMM, Naugachhia, Bhagalpur, and for the Bihar Education Project Board's training program at Naugachhia.

On the 12th and 13th, Swami Nirajan addressed a workshop conducted by Swamis Gyanbhikshu, Mangalteertham, Maheshananda and Sannyasi Narasimha for teachers and

students from the Dept of Naturopathy and Yoga, Lucknow University.

During Navaratri Swami Nirajan gave satsang and conducted havan at Ganga Darshan, and satsang on the 18th and 19th at Akshika Peeth, Chandisthan, Munger.

November

Sister Lalita, principal of Notre Dame Academy, Munger, organized a project in November and January whereby students in Standards IV to VII participated in yoga classes conducted by BYMM.

An HMC was conducted from the 4th to 11th at the Refinery Club, Barauni, by Swami Omkarananda.

On the 7th, Swami Shankarananda spoke at the Indian Institute of Coal Management, Ranchi.

On the 11th, Swami Nirajan gave satsang at the Jesus and Mary School, Patna.

A Kundalini Yoga course was conducted from the 12th to 17th by Swamis Yogakanti, Sumitrananda and Dr Swami Mudraroop.

A program was held from 24th November to 2nd December for the Bihar Education Project by Swamis Kaivalyananda, Gyanbhikshu, Mangalteertham, Dr Mridula Mishra, Sannyasi Mantranidhi and Jignasu Aradhanashakti.

December

For the first time, Swami Satyananda openly declared this year's yajna at Sri Panchdashnam Paramahansa Alakh Bara, Rikhia, to be a part of the 12-year Rajasooya Yajna. Swami Satyananda began giving satsang three days before Sita Kalyanam, along with kirtans and chanting of Ramayana Path. Sita Kalyanam was celebrated from the 11th to 19th. For Sat Chandi Mahayajna, the invocation of Devi, and poojan were performed by pandits from Varanasi. Manas Kokila Krishna Devi from Bhagalpur narrated Ramacharitamans followed by Rasalila, song and dance narration of episodes from Lord Krishna's life, presented by a troupe from Brij Rasalila Institute, Brindavan, in which Sri Swamiji and Swami Nirajan actively participated. Special prasad was distributed to the gathering of over 7,000 people and 100

newly married couples from Sri Swamiji's neighbourhood received Good Luck Kits.

On the 24th, Christmas Eve was celebrated in Christ Kutir by Swami Satyananda, Swami Nirajan, Father John from Deoghar and visitors. On Christmas Day, Sri Swamiji gave satsang and darshan.

A meditation course was held from 27th December to 1st January by Swamis Yogakanti and Sumitrananda.

Swami Atmabhishek conducted a yoga camp at Neel Padma Kunj, Ghaziabad, from 29th December to 6th January.





The first big event of this year was the Akhil Bharatiya Yoga Mahotsav held in Pune where over 5,000 people gathered to hear Swamiji on 'The Integration of Yoga, Bhakti and Science in the 21st Century'. Swamiji spoke on yoga and education, the building of samskaras and unfolding of creativity. At another large gathering in Bhubaneshwar for the National Yoga Satsang Samaroha Convention, Swamiji spoke on this subject yet again. While here, Swamiji also visited Puri to have darshan of Lord Jagannath and the ancient Shiva temple of Sri Lokanath.

Among his corporate programs, Swamiji spoke at the Bokaro steel plant premises where he addressed 600 senior executives on 'Stress Management through Yoga'. This was part of the Jharkhand Yoga Mahotsav, a commemorative event this year. A team of sannyasins, BYB students, BYMM Propagators and YMM sevaks had assisted with preliminary yoga programs for a month prior to the mahotsav.

BYMM reached out to Rikhia this year, a team of 12 Propagators taught over 2,700 children in three schools in Rikhia and 11 schools in Deoghar. Vikas Kumar, Pallavi Prakash,

Gautam, Richa and Kshitija conducted classes for children in the Paramahansa Alakh Bara premises. The highlight was satsang with Swami Satyananda, who declared Munger to be the spiritual capital of India. BYMM proved its mettle yet again when on Guru Poornima at Ganga Darshan the children managed a huge crowd of over 12,000 gathered to pay respects to the gurus.

Another moving tradition that was now in its sixth year was that of the little girls of BYMM going to Munger Jail to celebrate Raksha Bandhana when they tied rakhis on the wrists of prisoners, a ritual celebrated all over India between brothers and sisters on the full moon of August. This year, Swami Niranjana's presence inspired both the prisoners and the jail authorities.

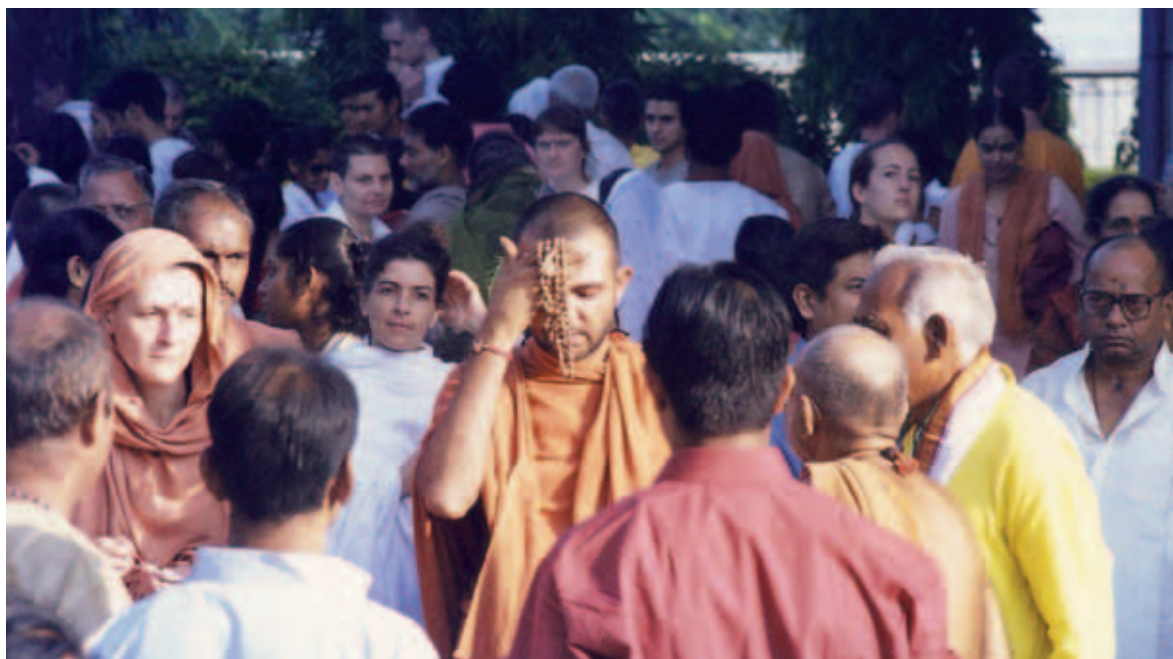
To systematize the research work, a Research Administration group was also set up in BYMM and weekly classes in research methodology were conducted for senior Propagators.

"Wasn't this the year when the Bhuj project was started?" asked my friend who had been helping the young boys from Sivananda Balakashram, Bhuj, who were visiting Ganga Darshan, with the folk dance performance they were going to present.

"Yes. At the beginning of this year, on 26 January 2001, tragedy had struck the region of Bhuj in western India when an earthquake had devastated the lives of many in this already impoverished region. Swamiji travelled to Bhuj two months later and surveyed the damage caused by the earthquake, particularly in Bhachau township, Old Bhuj city and Anjar town. He met with administrative officials and inspected earthquake relief work. He travelled to Bhuj yet again to inspect sites for SM's proposed Sivananda Balakashram, and construction sites where organizations were constructing housing with earthquake-resistant materials. He spoke about SM's proposal to establish a gurukul to assist in the rehabilitation of earthquake victims, particularly children.

"Eventually this idea became a reality and the most beautiful ashram was constructed in these desert lands, a ten acre plot at the foot of the panoramic Tapkeshwari Hills, three kilometres from Bhuj. Three years later during the Guru Poornima celebration at Bhuj, Swamiji inaugurated the project. Here children receive yogic samskaras and the opportunity of a modern education. The Balakashram houses and maintains the children and cares for their all-round development – physical, educational, social and





spiritual. The children are accommodated in the ashram, and further education will be arranged to whatever stage required, according to aptitude. The children have visited Ganga Darshan several times and their love for Swamiji could move the stoniest of hearts. At first they were shy, until, one evening in kirtan they started to dance – and we all danced! One of the Bhuj boys, Bhavchaitanya, speaks about how his life was transformed by guru's grace."

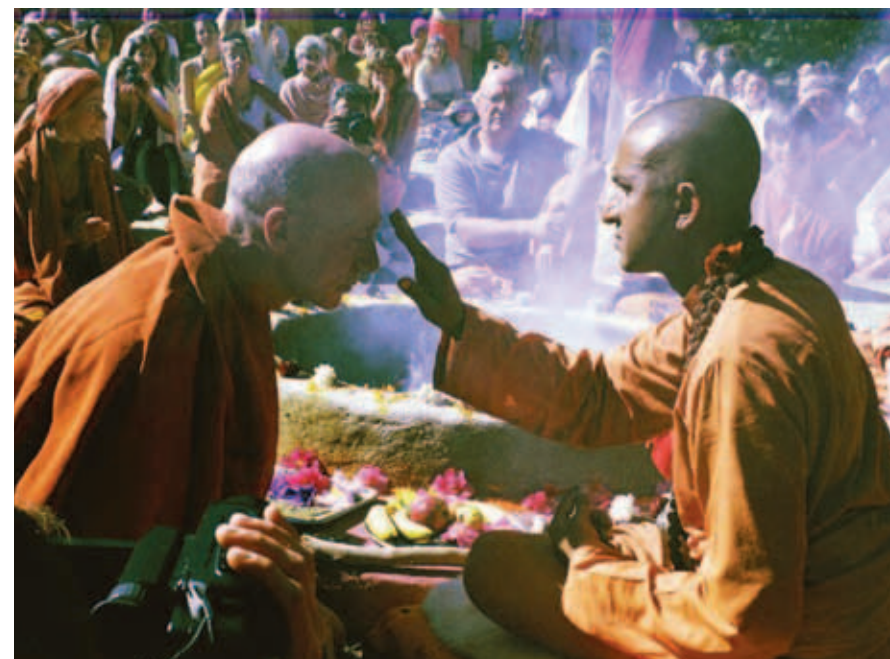
Guru's miracle

"In a devastating earthquake in 2001, in the Kutch district of Gujarat, many people lost their family, some lost their homes, and others lost everything. But with the blessings of Swami Satyananda and Swami Niranjana, Sivananda Math built an ashram in Bhuj and it was named Sivananda Balakashram – meaning an ashram or orphanage for children.

I came to that ashram when it was completed. I didn't like it there at first but I stayed because I was given a lot of love. It's my good fortune that I stayed on and met my guru.

When I lived at home, I wasn't very good at school. In fact, I was such a poor student that I failed eighth grade twice. At the ashram, I got so much help that I became a good student and passed the ninth grade. When I got only 40 percent marks in my tenth grade Board Exams I started thinking about the money and effort spent by the ashram on my education and all the facilities given to me, and began to study hard. In eleventh grade I got 60 percent and had become a good student. I got 62 percent in grade twelve and everyone in my village was so happy. In fact, they couldn't believe my exam results and asked me to check that I hadn't got it mixed up. Swami Niranjana was very pleased when he heard about my exam results.

Today I realize that coming to the ashram completely changed my life. I don't feel like the old me. I feel as if I've had a rebirth. When I lived at home I knew nothing; I've learned so much since coming to the ashram. The transformation happened because I met my guru. The guru has everything; one just has to go to him to obtain it. I never thought I would get a guru like Swamiji and I don't know how it happened. This is all a gift from God.



Today I know I am a decent human being and I will become a good person. Guru's grace brought me to Munger where I stayed for six months, did a course and imbibed some good qualities. Today I can say that my life has changed completely. I never thought that I would see a foreigner, but now I have lived with people from many countries and had the opportunity to learn English.

Now, when I go back to my village, everyone is proud of me and they ask me how I learned so much, where I learnt it and who taught me. When I tell them I learned everything in an ashram, they ask if they can also come there. I've decided that when I grow up I will teach my village and the nearby villagers yoga and everything else I know. I'll bring positive qualities into everyone's life. I think all the children in Swamiji's ashram will teach their villages and the surrounding villages good qualities, and everyone in Kutch will change, everyone in Kutch will learn and practise yoga daily.

Everything I am today is because of my guru. Everyone should find their guru and change their lives."

In 2001, Swami Nirmalananda who had been associated with Satyananda Yoga for several years, came from Mumbai as a fully qualified and experienced medical doctor and was immediately given many jobs she had no training for (basic ashram procedure!) but skills and samskaras will express themselves and in a beneficial environment we see wonderful results from a little cross-pollination.

Research

"When in 1997, Swami Niranjanananda asked me to look into the work of the Yoga Research Foundation (YRF), along with teaching in the Dept of Applied Yogic Science, BYB, I was quite

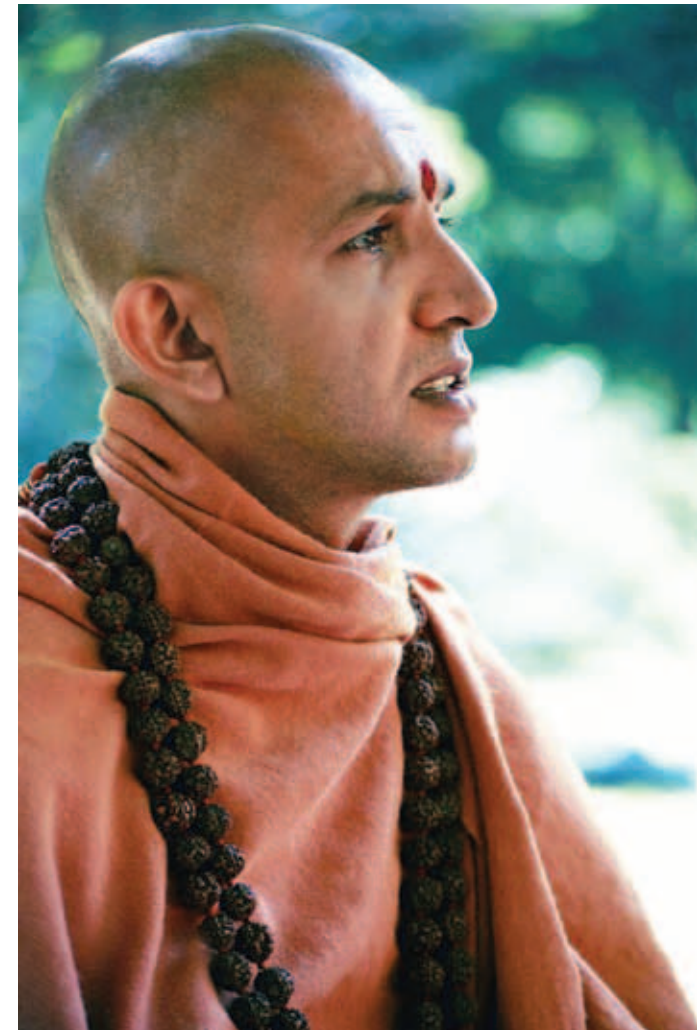


excited. Though I had no research background or training, I started day-dreaming about big projects. Swamiji, with his unending patience and brilliant tactfulness brought me down to practicality and reality time and again. I would go to Swamiji with big plans and proposals for buying this equipment and that equipment. He would patiently listen to every word, and at the end would say, 'For now you use BP instruments and measuring tape and carry out experiments.' I would always react in my mind, 'Oh! Again the same reply!'

Gradually I started understanding that yoga research is not like medical research. It need not be highly technical and the outcome is often very subjective and so difficult to measure and document. Even now, several years later, YRF is restricting its activities to physiological and some psychological aspects of research, as yet the area of consciousness, emotions, attitudes, personality development, etc. are hardly explored.

Initial research projects were woven around BYB activities. Either the students were the subjects or they were researching on themselves or others. YRF did some very good projects using simple tools like BP instruments, swara mirror, measuring cups, measuring tapes and weighing scales, peak flow meters and instant electronic thermometers. BYB students had great fun studying the effects of individual asanas on pulse rate and BP, thus establishing their safety for elderly or hypertensive subjects. They also studied their effects on flexibility, swara, posture and to a limited extent on emotions and attitudes. All this helped them understand clearly the application of individual asanas in therapy and in sadhana.

A very informative experiment done by YRF was to document the extent of salt and water absorption, retention and excretion during laghoo shankhaprakshalana and poorna shankhaprakshalana using simple tools like pulse rate, BP, body weight, urine output and timing of bowel movements. It made me realize the truth in guru's words! And slowly, with cooperation from the Dept of Yoga Psychology, we started using psychological parameters like researching the effects of trataka on memory in addition to its effects on visual acuity, assessing



surya namaskara's effects on self-confidence along with its effects on menstrual problems, studying the effects of yoga nidra on creativity in children.

The other area of work for YRF was yoga therapy. Health Management Course (HMC) participants were the subjects. YRF ran special six-week diabetic courses for two consecutive years with excellent results and also conducted diabetes research camps in other BSY ashrams: Rajnandgaon, Bhubaneshwar and



Raipur. YRF also studied asthma using spirometry tests. In these studies short-term results were excellent.

I used to get frustrated a lot, always complaining to Swamiji, 'YRF hasn't got sufficient modern equipment and the library has no research related literature or information on other people's researches.' On one such occasion I dragged Swamiji to the YRF office and to the library to prove my case. After listening to my cries for over an hour he patiently and

smilingly gave his usual reply, 'Don't worry, you have to wait – so what? It will happen for sure. For now you have to be content with checking pulse and BP.' How true were his words! A few years later we started to collaborate with BHEL hospital in Bhopal to launch our therapy research projects in various diseases.

Swamiji had been inspiring the BYMM children to do research. Those young children started to come along and help in data collection and the Y2M2 teenagers helped in scoring and data inputting. In 2003, YRF was planning a research on puberty and it was launched in Indore in two schools with the help of the Satyananda Yoga Kendra. It was a five-year project to study the influence of yoga on puberty.

Then a very exciting and challenging proposal came from BYMM in 2007 – we were to guide the children and they would themselves do research in yoga. This was Swamiji's dream come true! Swamiji selected the best of the psychology tests and we adjusted them to deliver on a big group rather than small groups or one-to-one situations. YRF coached the BYMM children to do everything. They enrolled and grouped the research subjects, underwent training in executing various tests on the 400 enrolled subjects of the yoga group, and on the control group. They conducted the yoga classes for the subjects in asana, pranayama, yoga nidra, karma yoga and yama, niyama in the form of stories, chanting and yogic games. They planned the data collection in minute detail, organized themselves accordingly and executed the event to perfection. They scored the answer sheets, tabulated the data and learned how to do data entry on computer.

Before YRF was even born, many researches had been conducted by BSY under the guidance of Swami Satyananda and Swami Niranjan. Even YRF had done many big projects before I was involved. Still, when I came along, Swamiji patiently started the process of training all over again and I have benefited so much. He planted the seed and kept watering it by his patient words, 'Measure pulse and BP and observe the effects.' Only after several years has the hard shell broken and the seed sprouted in me. Under Swamiji's nurturing care this young plant

is now growing steady and strong. Storms and bad weather may come but the roots are planted deep and the needs are simple so the plant will survive. I have realized that most of the big learnings come through small observations made intently and consistently. Research need not only happen in labs, with keen eyes and ears and an analytical mind it can happen in your own home or yoga centre."

"I can see that the children are quickly becoming a force to be reckoned with," remarked a yoga teacher returning to Ganga Darshan after a few years away. "They seem so self-disciplined!"





“Swami Niranjan often speaks of them affectionately as his ‘monkey army’, and the reference is to the devotion, skill and energy Hanuman’s people showed fighting for Sri Rama, it’s not because they are distracted by monkey-mindedness like many of us adults.”

“I’d love to go along to one of their classes. Who’s teaching them? Does Swamiji teach them himself?”

“Well, these ones are mainly all teachers already, and the more experienced ones teach the newcomers. They do receive

direct teaching but more than that, Swamiji constantly empowers and challenges them by opening up opportunities.”

“Yes, he mentioned the research they did with YRF when he was explaining about the growth of BYMM in Europe.”

“Well, they are the ones; they can be seen any weekend at Ganga Darshan, fully involved in their own business, going to classes to learn different skills, or introducing wide-eyed lines of new children to the ashram, with its lifts and bathrooms, yoga practices and their own procedures.”

“He must be proud of them.”

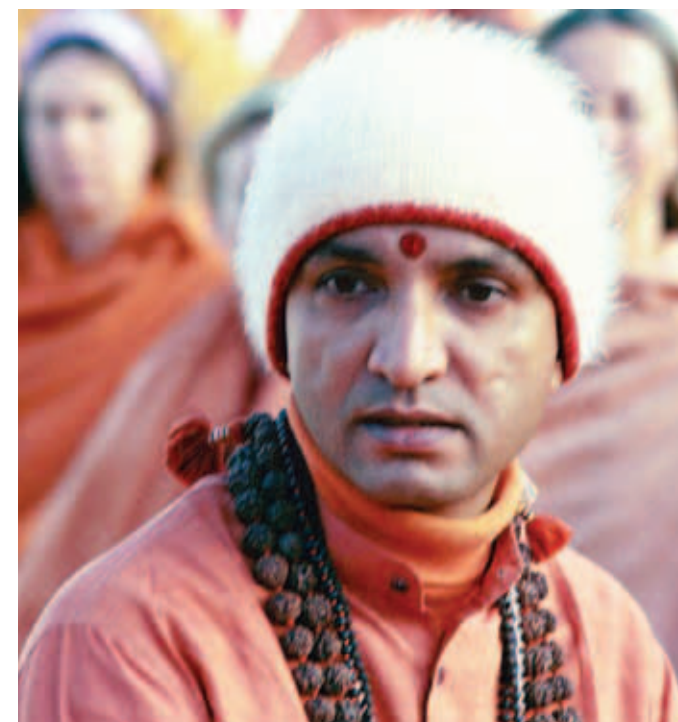
“Oh yes, though he keeps it all very low key. What was he telling people in Europe about them?”

The children want this form of education

“The inspiration for the Satyananda Yoga system, also known as the Bihar Yoga system in India, emanates from a lineage of masters whose concern was not only individual spiritual development, but also the integrated development of human society. BYMM, the Children’s Yoga Fellowship, is dedicated to the development of the total personality of children between the ages of seven to fourteen, when they are most receptive. Yoga believes that education is much more than the academic teaching given in the school system. How we are going to evolve and respond to life’s situations opens important issues in everyone’s life, and yoga tries to provide the answers.”

The process of education in the world today emphasizes intellectual development and we have learned to believe that the higher the IQ, the better the person. However, often the higher the IQ, the less able one is to interact positively in society. One is not able to relate or communicate with other people because there is an imbalance. The human personality is a combination of the qualities of head, heart and hands. If we work with our intellect only, there is lop-sided personality development. The EQ or emotional quotient is related to the heart. There is also the SQ or social quotient. These are the three components of personality: intelligence, emotions and interactions, or head, heart and hands. The aim of BYMM is to integrate all three aspects.

It’s a very dynamic movement. At the end of 1999, after only five years, it had over 1,000 yoga teachers and demonstrators, who are all children and who teach yoga better than all of us, because they can understand their students’ problems. Once I was meeting with the Department of Education in New Delhi to discuss guidelines for incorporating yoga into school education. A group of children between the ages of seven and ten accompanied me, and gave their views on the content of the syllabus to the education specialists. They said, ‘You decide what we are going to learn without knowing our problems. We, the children, want this form of education,’ and they gave an outline which was much appreciated by the department. Let us hope that a balanced education system can evolve in the course of time, one that will look into all three aspects of a child’s personality. BYMM is a movement in which children are taking responsibility for their lives, for their education, for their attitudes and for their behaviour.”



Is that all he said? He speaks about them in a very restrained way, doesn't he?"

"Yes, he does. But then he never advertises much."

"Still, I suppose this book is a sort of advertisement, isn't it?"

"This book," I say reverently, "will be a miracle if it ever gets printed. Every time he sees it he's taking his articles out, or telling me to put in smaller ones. But it's the teachings that are important," I say, a tad too self-righteously.

"Well, good luck. But it's curious about the children. He speaks about them as though it's just an educational experiment he's conducting, but when he's with them there's such warmth both ways."

"Yes, they love him and the whole transformation in their lives. But he's not sentimental, he just keeps on encouraging them to express themselves creatively. Like on Swami



Satyananda's sannyasa birthday this year, BYMM enacted a play called 'The War of Kurukshetra', originally written by Sri Swamiji. And in front of all the university VIPs of BYB, he presented the results of another research study involving members of BYMM, showing the beneficial effects of yoga practice on children's balanced all-round development. They feel they are doing something meaningful with their lives, and that's increasingly important for all of us as we grow up. Now the children and teenagers are often to be seen around the ashram, and after all, it's their second home. They grow fast, but even when they're little they can see what's happening and be very inspired and inspiring. Hey, Ruchi, do you have anything to say about Swamiji?"

"No", she said shyly, "but I've already written my feelings, in English too. Would you like to see it?"

An everlasting impression

"I would like to say that Swami Niranjana is unique. The spiritual dynamism with which he moves is not conventional, and you don't have to make any effort towards reaching him, his love is so broad and open and so easily given. The stream of eloquence comes from the heart, his style is unique for its harmonious blend of simplicity and force. The pure flame of truth burns in him, a calmness and coolness born of courageous strength of will and mind can be seen in him."

Being with such a person itself makes one feel special. Whenever we meet him he makes us burst with laughter and at the same time he gives the best wisdom of the Bhagavad Gita, Vedas and other spiritual books. In him can be found penetrating intelligence and robust common sense, strong will, talent and genius, strength and softness and abundance, and an enjoyment and above all, spiritual understanding and enlightenment. The unusual coalescence and coexistence of all these elements not only differentiate Swamiji from the rest, but distinguish him as being simply the great. His divine glamour, unassuming depth of knowledge and pure saintly innocence mingled with his constant cheerfulness has made an everlasting impression on me."



Gautam, you've been very busy with BYMM, and you've been teaching yoga to so many people also. What do you think of Swamiji and what you're really learning here?"

He loves children the most

"Swamiji is a person with extraordinary talent and positive attitude. He has a vast storehouse of words. His smiling face is bewitching. He transmits tolerance, self-sacrifice, affection and a sense of service in a most natural way. He possesses a wonderful magnetic personality, so everybody is attracted towards him. He

loves children the most. We derive so much energy from him that we never get tired when serving in the ashram. A look at him transmits energy and one feels that one can move mountains. He has the same respect for all religions and religious people, thus he is equipped with divine qualities.”

“**A**nd Kumar Rahul, as a Pracharak, a fully qualified BYMM Yoga Propagator, would you like to say something about what’s been happening in your experience?”



Guru sakshat parambrahma

“I can’t find any words to say anything about Swamiji,” he hesitated. “He is like a jyoti that sacrifices itself to bring light into the life of others. He is the guru who illumines the life of his disciples. He has given us knowledge and made our lives beautiful. We have to water a plant so that it develops into a tree, similarly he has taught us yoga to build the future of the country, as children are its future. Today, when the guru-disciple relationship is at a discount, Swamiji has emerged as a guru who is trying his best for the welfare of his disciples. Having such a guru, we children are really blessed.”

The long-term capacity to take care of people’s welfare is actually quite a different thing to well-meaning spurts of generosity. Yuva Yoga Mitra Mandal (Y2M2 as they call themselves) grew up because some teenagers who hadn’t been in BYMM got involved in the village yatra programs and wanted to join. Y2M2 aims to provide young college students with a way to express their potential in every sphere of activity, conducting camps, yoga training and social service. Swamiji described Y2M2 as ‘an endeavour of youth for the dissemination of Bihar Yoga’ and gave them the motto ‘Yoga, Dedication and Service’. He declared Y2M2 to be a wing of BSY for service to humanity and for the needs of humankind.

The attitude of serving others, surrender, or of living life as a sacrifice, is a spiritual necessity – but how can one survive with that attitude in today’s world? The best way to learn it is by seeing someone who can make it happen. It’s not an intellectual concept to be argued about, it has to be experienced from the inside, so the attitude is natural and right, even on the battlefield of life.

When Swamiji returned from Bhuj this year, he appeared determined to offer meaningful assistance. With the help of sannyasins and devotees, SM, and various resources of BSY, plans began to be finalized. Through this, he was also encouraging us all to learn and apply the attitudes of yoga in selfless service, as he has been doing for years. The next thing we heard was that Manish Poddar, President of Y2M2 at the time, Anurag Joshi, and a group of Y2M2 youngsters were going to help with rehabilitation work among the people in Bhuj, especially those their own age. Swami Niranjan advised them to concentrate on service to humanity and on providing the healing touch to the suffering and traumatized people, holding Bihar Yoga as their inspiration. He organized some basic training and facilitated things. That’s the thing about children; they learn.

Let us hear what Swami Yogabhakti has to say about Swamiji’s involvement with children.

A teacher for all times

My association with Bihar School of Yoga dates back to May 1968 when I first met Swami Satyananda in Paris. It no doubt

represented a landmark regarding both my training into the depths of yoga and the creation, ten years later, of the movement called RYE, Research on Yoga in Education. Being an English teacher and a yoga practitioner, I felt the necessity for a change in the field of learning. Through this encounter, I was inspired and still am.

The progressive stages through which RYE has gained worldwide recognition have been sustained by Swamij Niranjan’s presence



who on the occasion of his tours, was often invited in France to give lectures on the challenging subject: how to deal with children. Everybody claims that the test of our times is the reform of education. A good thing is to talk about it, another one is to start reforming. Many trials initiated in various countries have failed mainly due to a lack of understanding of the purpose of education. Real knowledge has to be defined before any positive action is taken to improve the school system. Swamiji has brought us his philosophical awareness about the meaning, as well as his own empirical experience, having himself created the program of Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal. Even

though a wonderful institution of this kind, ruled by the young people themselves could not be reproduced in the West – for the time being at least, due probably to its revolutionary (evolutionary!) character – we can assume that it represents a step forward in the schooling of the generations to come.

Swamiji made this point very clear on the platform of the UNESCO when he was invited by RYE on March 22nd, 2000, to give two lectures on the theme: 'Ancient Wisdom' and 'Innovations in Pedagogy'. This memorable event called together remarkable men and women from all over the world. Among them were eminent scientists, thinkers, educational specialists, psychologists and spiritual figures. Swamiji mostly emphasized the following points: that the foremost goal of education should take into account all the dimensions of the person, not only the intellect; that the cultivation of an attentive perception is a basic necessity for a balanced growth; that learning capacities depend as much on cognitive processes as on sensitivity; that the ability to control disruptive emotions brings about improved relationships between learners and teachers; that the calm arising from the introduction of yoga at school awakens self-confidence and creativity in the pupils. The conclusion was that universities should study the effects of yoga on learning and promote its implementation in the curriculum of teachers' training institutions. It is obvious that such innovation cannot be improvised and requires data adapted to the various age groups and levels of understanding. The research has been successfully continued in many countries on the terrain of schools for more than 30 years and it has been the merit of Swamiji to federate them internationally, wherever he travelled, insisting on the fact that a yoga-based education would not be restricted to the betterment of the academic sphere only, but would benefit the whole of society. It is true that the ethical evolution of the young people will not be accomplished by sermons but by self-discipline. Thanks to the postures gently linked with breathing, to relaxation exercises and to the good humour of the teachers influenced by their own regular practice, a transformation will take place in the students' state of mind and a change in the environment will follow.

I have always believed that some rare people give a positive influence to every thing they do, every word they utter. And this

struck me the first time I ever met Swamiji. He was about 18 at the time. It was in Zinal (Switzerland). He had been sent there by Sri Swamiji who had been a regular speaker and a popular host in this great gathering of yogis, but he did not attend it that year. So his successor took the lead. I remember how I was enthralled like the rest of the audience by the quality of his speech, wondering how, young as he was, he could transmit



such wisdom. I could admire how through his buoyancy and joie de vivre during his lectures and outside the stage, he was endowed with the capacity to express so freely the changeless eternal essence of life. Since then I have been under the spell of a twinkle, a smile in his eyes, revealing how for a fleeting moment, the harmony of opposites may be perceived, when a zest for life blends with profound insight.

Like so many people, I have heard about his fabulous birth. Whenever I happen to meet Swami Dharmashakti, I can feel the deep love, strength and devotion our Swamiji was bathed in from

the womb. There his training began. And with the flow of life, ours too. He once said: 'If the teacher enjoys what he is doing and gives out positive emanations, then the student will be able to understand and perceive more of the practice and may be able to do it ten times better. Everything lies in the teacher's attitude.' That is what he exemplifies so well: the teacher's attitude.

There is a beautiful image in yoga nidra: on a white lotus flower rocked gently by the waves, there is a baby lying and that baby is the Self in our bosom, when we can reach the purity of an ocean of peace. It seems to me that, in this chaotic epoch of ours, Swami Niranjana is passing on this very peace to us all."

Swami Niranjana's visit to Australia this year moved the emphasis of yoga from formal sadhana for individual benefit to subtle sadhana permeating and uplifting society. Effectively, the emphasis shifted from what you can get to what you can give. It started when he inaugurated the new yoga teaching centre in Melbourne and spoke on the ashtanga yoga of Swami Sivananda. He spoke on attitude, and it inspired many, encouraging a sudden recognition of those backseat drivers in the mind.

In Rocklyn, during a havan dedicated to the Devi celebrated with rose petals and fragrant native woods, Swami Niranjana initiated people into mantra, jignasu and karma sannyasa and offered inspiration for research into the purifying effects on the atmosphere of burning herbs during yajna. He explained Patanjali's instructions to have friendliness, compassion, joy and indifference to those who are happy, sorrowful, virtuous or vicious, relating it to Swami Sivananda's message to serve, love, give, purify, do good, be good, meditate and realize.

Later, he was giving satsang again in the huge tent set up for the occasion when, outside, the temperature plummeted during an icy storm. Through the transparent walls of the tent we could see the flurries of snow falling on to the gardens and into the lake. Inside, the emergency heaters glowed, illustrating his teaching that inspiration is not enough; it is only when we light the internal fire that we can steadily radiate warmth, light and love to those around us.



He explained this further at the Easter Meditation Retreat in Mangrove Mountain when he was talking to people who have been practising the exercises of yoga for a long time now, but without feeling that they have really attained their aims. He spoke on how a positive outlook on life is self-fulfilling and generates positive experiences. This theme inspired all the speakers. Satsang, lectures and question and answer sessions were conducted by Swamiji, Dr Rishi Vivekananda, Dr Swami Shankardevananda, Swamis Nityabodhananda, Poornamurti and Yogakanti, emphasizing the interconnectedness of different life forms on earth. Swamiji explained fire ceremonies as vedic rituals to celebrate human connectedness with other beings and dimensions of existence.

Swamiji's message was that we have the freedom and duty to express the benefits of yoga in daily life from now on. In his wake, we have gained self knowledge, learning to some extent to conduct self-analysis focusing on our strengths rather than weaknesses, developing and expressing positive qualities for individual and social upliftment.

We had heard that Swami Satyananda slipped away from the Akhara in Rikhia alone, and went to the Kumbha Mela in February, bathing in the icy waters of the holy confluence of rivers, mixing with the thousands of sadhus gathered there and

meeting with the heads of the various sannyasa traditions. So as soon as the chance presented itself:

"Any official news came of what transpired there?"

"No. We just know he went on pilgrimages to the Himalayas and elsewhere, by himself and sometimes accompanied by Swami Niranjan. We heard Swami Niranjan also went at least three times. It's a time of auspicious conjunctions among the constellations."

"I think it's wonderful that he just walks off like that." I remarked to the sannyasi, newly returned from Rikhia, "but some devotees find it worrying. They fear he might disappear and they'll lose contact, and Swami Niranjan will become even busier and we'll never see him."

"How can you lose contact with your guru?" My young friend said in an exasperated tone. "After all – what is guru?"

"Yeah," I agreed quickly, hoping we would not be put to the acid test any time soon. "Anyway, I feel that the Rajasooya Yajna is one of his gifts of compassion to us – it extends over 12 years so we know he'll be around at least while this continues. After that – well, we must be in for some pretty big changes."

"Why do you say that?" she asked.

"Well, it is 2002 next year," I said, "and remember, Sri Swamiji's life has been in 20-year cycles so far."

"The conqueror of hearts," she murmured fondly. "He said the Rajasooya Yajna is conducted by one who is a conqueror, and he himself is one."

Conqueror of hearts

"I conquered people's hearts and made them my own. Therefore, we celebrate the Rajasooya Yajna which is performed over many years, not in one year. A yajna has three important parts. Firstly, the pooja, the tantric worship, the chanting and the ritual; secondly, satsang, kirtan and spiritual company; and thirdly, giving prasad to each and every one. Giving means that you also give and I also give. This is yajna."

I have decided that things will not improve by my staying silent. I regard myself as a digvijayi, one who has conquered the seven seas. From 1963 until 1983 I travelled to every corner of the world and established the flag of yoga. At that time, nobody knew about yoga. I took this ancient science and art of ours out of the forests and planted it in hospitals, schools and colleges. Yoga was transferred from the ashrams of the sages to dance institutes and music centres. I established yoga in the Christian community too. Everyone cooperated with me in this endeavour. No one challenged me. No one questioned my credentials, never!

Once I met the Pope at the Vatican. When I told him I taught yoga he remarked, 'Yoga is an oriental philosophy and we are occidental. How will you integrate eastern philosophy with western culture?' I replied, 'As it was done 2,000 years ago. Though an oriental philosophy, Christianity is firmly rooted in occidental culture. Similarly, yoga is an oriental science and it can also fit into occidental society.' The Pope was silenced by my forthright reply, he knew that Christianity is an oriental religion. So my path was clear. All the important Christian centres welcomed me, both Catholic and Protestant. Everywhere I was received with respect and assisted in every way."

Christianity was born in the East. Christ visited India and Nepal, he lived in Varanasi and Puri. He was initiated on Indian soil. The whole world knows it. Even if the church does not accept it, history records this fact. History says that Christ spent 12 years in India and the Bible bears this out, as it is silent about 13 years of his life. Records relating to this period are found in the archives in Kathmandu and bear testimony. After all, what is Christianity? It's raja yoga! When Christ came to India some 2,000 years ago there were two thought currents prevalent. One was Buddhism and the other was Vaishnavism. Buddha's philosophy was predominantly ethical

whereas Vaishnava philosophy was predominantly devotional. Christianity embraces both.

The Rajasooya Yajna was performed during the time of Lord Rama and Lord Krishna. When the emperor Yudhishtira performed this yajna, do you know which duty Lord Krishna had? He did not serve food. The duty he assigned himself was washing the feet of the guests and removing and disposing of their leaf plates after the feast. That holder of the correct perception of Reality, that sudarshan-dhari god, who was an incarnation of the Almighty, washed the feet of the guests and removed their plates after they had finished eating!

My parents and grandparents advised me to win over the world by virtue of the teachings of the shastras because the age of the sword is over. Now, in Kali Yuga, one has to conquer the world through the power of scriptural knowledge, through humility, not with pride and force. So, I am not going to use the sudarshan chakra (Sri Krishna's discus which cuts through everything). I have only one way of changing the world, which is turning the other cheek. Animosity cannot be quelled with animosity. The sword cannot silence the sword; the sword is silenced by love. This is the teaching of the saints and sages."



Yoga in the 21st Century

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Traditionally, yoga has always been a means of internalizing the awareness and discovering the inner self. In the past, over thousands of years, yoga practitioners developed a series of practices by which people could attain physical health, mental harmony and spiritual upliftment. In the course of time, due to changes in the social and global environment, the ancient tradition of yoga was lost in many countries, but it continued to be preserved in India by sannyasins. Sannyasa is not a religion; it is an order of people who have renounced the material world to experience the spiritual world. Yoga is a science which deals with the management and development of human personality – harmony of body and mind, and experience of spirit.

Swami Satyananda has said, “The important part of a tree is not the external part that can we see, but the roots which are underground and invisible. The roots sustain the tree and as long as they are nourished, the tree can face any situation, but if the roots are neglected, the tree will become weak and fall down in a storm.” Our life is like that because we identify with the body, senses and mind, which are the external manifestations of our personality. We ignore the realization of the greater potential that exists within us, which is recognized as spirit.

Spirit is part of the evolution of consciousness. Life is a process of constant evolution at different levels. Evolution is the outcome of a focused and illuminated mind. We have within us the same qualities as Christ and Buddha. The only difference is that they were experimenting with those qualities and we have ignored that aspect of our life. They were continually refining themselves while we have stagnated at one point. This is the barrier we all face as human beings, the limitation that we cannot overcome in our life.

So, when yoga appeared, it was to discover that inner spiritual potential. At the same time, those who developed yoga realized

that growth had to take place in all dimensions of existence. The body needs to be harmonized so that it can manage illness and disease. To manage physical imbalances, the physical postures were developed. Physical harmony alters the activity of the brain. Cerebral and physical harmony influences the mental behaviour. In the process of harmonizing the personality, the mind also becomes in tune with its inner strengths.



The classical literature says that yoga begins with mind management. This is the aim of yoga, not self-realization. A blind man may want to see the sun, but that is not his need. If your need is to obtain vision, then your aim becomes to transform yourself and to change your nature. How we can realize and manage our mind, body and emotions is the main theme of yoga. The rest is only the outcome of this harmony.

In the past, yoga teachers did not make this concept clear and yoga was seen as a mystical, abstract subject. In the

1960s yoga began to be propagated by those who realized that yoga was the need of people everywhere. Awareness of yoga became more widespread. At the same time, there were many taboos associated with yoga because nobody really knew what yoga was. To play safe, people only practised the physical aspect because the body felt good, light, vibrant and energetic. That is how hatha yoga first became popular, and today most people only know the physical aspect of yoga. Yoga was practised in this way until approximately the end of the twentieth century.

Swami Sivananda was a medical doctor and a philosopher. He said that yoga had to be established in scientific terms, that people should understand the practical as well as the philosophical aspects. Swami Satyananda then developed and carried forward his guru's idea. He was one of the first exponents of yoga to discover and teach the effects and benefits of yoga for the management of physical, psychological and spiritual imbalances. This application of yoga is called integral yoga or Satyananda Yoga.

The main theme of Satyananda Yoga is awakening of the faculties of head, heart and hands. The head represents intelligence, wisdom, knowledge, understanding, awareness and observation. The heart represents feelings, emotions and sentiments. The hands represent the ability to act, to perform and to create. The ability to manage these three components of our life is the need of the 21st century, because this balance will make a person whole and complete.

By saying that Satyananda Yoga is head, heart and hands, it does not mean that hatha yoga or physical yoga is not part of the process. The entire system of yoga is divided into four main parts. The first component is training, disciplining and transforming our mental behaviour, attitudes and involvement in the material world by practising the *yamas*, restraints, and *niyamas*, disciplines. Just changing a small habit requires a huge quantity of willpower. You can reduce its intensity, but you cannot eradicate or eliminate it. For this reason, yoga speaks of restraint

and inner discipline to reduce the intensity of these conditionings which hamper the expression of our natural creativity. According to the classical texts, this is the beginning of yoga.

In the second part, we begin to work with our body to provide the physical organs with health and well-being. Research has shown that many psychosomatic illnesses and disorders can be managed through yogic principles and practices. In many countries yoga is in the frontline of therapies along with allopathic treatments. Yoga is used in the management of respiratory problems such as bronchitis, asthma and emphysema, circulatory system and heart disorders, digestive problems of the stomach, pancreas, kidney and liver, and for optimum functioning of the organs. The role of yogic practices in the management of cancer and AIDS is under clinical investigation.

Asanas, postures, and *pranayamas*, breathing techniques, help to remove the imbalances which cause illness and disease. But yoga is not a therapy, and should not be considered as such. Yoga is a process of managing oneself, not the symptoms of the disease. A person with hypertension takes medicine to lower the high blood pressure. As long as the medicine continues to be effective, the pressure stays down, but when the effect goes away the pressure again shoots up. If we have diabetes, we take insulin. These are not therapies that cure but which manage the symptoms manifesting in the body. Yoga manages you, not the symptoms. If you are able to lead a balanced life, these problems will leave you naturally. So yoga manages the person, not the disease. Therefore, yoga is not a therapy, but a lifestyle. If you are willing to adopt that disciplined lifestyle, then you become a yogi.

The third component of yoga is mind management. Only ten percent of the brain is active. We live according to the dictates of this limited mind. When we are unable to meet our expectations and desires, insecurity, tension, stress, fear and conflict arise. We enter a state of high anxiety when dealing with the demands of the ego. To be happy, we

think we need something and when we are unable to get it, frustration and aggression arise. Mentally, we are driven by a quest for happiness that satisfies our own needs without any consideration for others. This represents a totally self-centred mind. Possessiveness and selfishness manifest and confusion and conflict take hold of the personality.

In the mental aspect of yoga, we become aware of the four components of the mind – strengths, weaknesses, ambitions and needs. We have the strength in us, but we are not aware of it. We identify with our weaknesses and they become the reality. We identify with and pursue our ambitions, and



ignore our needs. We are more aware of our ambitions and weaknesses than our strengths and needs.

How do we come out of this state? The yogic practices of relaxation and concentration increase awareness and observation of the mental behaviour, regulating the mind and its expressions. Mental yoga begins with a simple relaxation practice, known as yoga nidra. With relaxation comes concentration, focusing and awareness to achieve what we need and aspire for. When the mind is illuminated, awareness spreads in all directions. If the light is focused to a point, it becomes a laser beam strong enough to cut steel or soft enough to perform laser surgery on the eye. The same effect can be had by focusing the energies of the mind

at one point to fulfil one's objective. That is concentration. So relaxation and concentration are the means to transform the nature and behaviour of the mind.

The fourth aspect of yoga is spiritual understanding, which is the outcome of wisdom – applied knowledge. We have knowledge, but never apply it. Often we know what is right and wrong, but cannot resolve the issue and be satisfied. Therefore, spiritual evolution begins with understanding and applied knowledge, which is the meditative process leading to an altered state of consciousness.

Meditation gives a broader perspective. The higher you go, the greater your vision and perception. That is spiritual realization. It is necessary to lift yourself from this level of perception and experience a higher dimension where you become a witness of yourself. Through the process of meditation you keep on growing in an infinite dimension.

What is the relevance of yoga today? The moment we manage the intellect, emotions and actions, we give evolution a chance to guide our life. If you want a fruit tree, you plant the seed in the ground, leave it and don't dig it up every day to see if it is sprouting or not. So, instead of digging fifty holes one foot deep to search for water, dig one hole fifty feet deep. The key is to follow one chain of thought, experience and understanding, and allow it to evolve, take over and guide your actions. If you want to excel in professional life, you pick one subject and master it. The same rule has to apply internally. Pursuing one direction gives evolution a chance to guide your life.

Therefore, integration of head, heart and hands is the theme of yoga in the 21st century, along with awareness of our spiritual nature, which has to be nourished like the roots of a tree. If you want to experience the depth of yoga, then immerse yourself in this idea: live, love and laugh. Have one thought in the mind: "No matter how many times I fall, I will always get up smiling and keep on walking." So, smile and walk. ॐ



January

BYMM conducted classes from the 6th to 13th for teachers and at Munger Jail from the 20th to 25th in January and February. A team of 12 Sannyasi Course students and six BYMM Propagators conducted 150 five-day yoga camps around Kolkata from 15th January to 18th February.

On the 12th, Swami Niranjana was the chief guest at the Silver Jubilee Celebration of Chakshudan Yajna Samiti, Lakhisarai.

Swami Satyananda Yoga Ashramam, Vijayawada, conducted a retreat from the 17th to 21st, a seminar at Indira Gandhi Stadium on the 27th, five one-week HMCs from January to March and three 20-day programs at Jabilli Hospital.

Kahalgaon Yoga School Construction Association organized a yoga camp from the 14th to 27th at Uma Bharti Children's School in Madarganj village, conducted by Sannyasi Govindacharya.

From 15th January to 9th February, a Teacher Training Course was conducted at Ganga Darshan for students, scientists and yoga teachers from Iran led by Sannyasi Sadhanabindu, followed by a course from the 11th to 22nd February for

doctors and medical students in the group.

The Yoga Mitra Mandal and Lions Club, Balconagar, Korba, conducted a program from the 16th to 23rd with Sannyasi Dharmakirti.

From the 17th to 26th, Swami Niranjana conducted programs in Mumbai, Thane, Nasik and Chembur.

A course was held from the 20th to 27th for executives from Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd, Sambalpur, culminating in darshan of Swami Satyananda at Rikhia.

BYMM conducted one-week camps from 26th January to 3rd February in Sitakund, Shankarpur, Katerya and Bindwar. Swami Niranjana and Swami Shankarananda gave satsang.

Classes were conducted from 26th January to 8th February for Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy, Hyderabad,



by Swami Vigyanachaitanya and Jignasu Manomaya.

From the 28th to 30th, YYMM members taught in a 'Yoga from Door to Door' program at 16 venues in Jamalpur.

Swami Omkarananda, Sannyasis Mahaprajnananda and Atmanubhuti held programs at NTPC, Kahalgaon, from 28th January to 1st February and from 4th to 8th February.

February

BYMM selected 250 children for the Yoga Training Group from the 1st to 7th, held a Children's Yoga Day at Ganga Darshan on the 14th, conducted three yoga courses from the 21st to 28th at the ITC Workers Institute, Bariarpur, and in Janakinagar, and a course at Sivananda Ashram from the 21st to 28th.

BSY conducted HMCs in Rikhia from the 3rd to 20th for diabetes and related ailments and in March for asthma and respiratory disorders.

An Introductory Teacher Training Course was conducted at Atma Darshan Yogashram, Bangalore, from 5th February to 15th March by Swami Sureshwarananda.

The Foundation Day of BSY was celebrated on the 17th with satsang by Swami Niranjana.

Swami Niranjana was in Kolkata from the 21st to 24th for the Akhil Bharatiya Yoga Mahotsava.

March

A yoga program was held at Gyan Darshan Yogashram, Bhilai, from the 1st to 3rd by Sannyasi Dharmapriya.

At Sivananda Ashram, Swami Niranjana addressed an Introductory Yoga Course for women, organized by Sannyasi Atmarupa and conducted from the 1st to 8th by BYYMM (Bal Yuva Yoga Mitra Mandal) in 35 centres in Munger.

YYMM members conducted a 'Yoga from Door to Door' program from the 3rd to 7th in 56 centres in Munger and Jamalpur.

From the 4th to 9th, executives from Mahanadi Coal Fields Ltd, Sambalpur, attended a program at Ganga Darshan.

At the request of the Bihar Government, programs were held for prison inmates from the 14th to 20th. YYMM conducted classes in seven Bihar prisons. Participants underwent psychological testing at the beginning and end of the program as part of a research project for BYB Yoga Psychology Dept.

BYMM organized courses from the 11th to 20th at the ITC Workers Institute and in Itahari, and from the 21st to 30th at Sivananda Ashram, Munger. Kumar Ritesh taught prisoners in Munger Jail from the 20th to 25th. Yoga courses were held at Sivananda Ashram from the 21st to 30th by Ankit and Rimjhim. Kumar Vedavrat gave classes for Examination Council students. Swami Nirajan was in Australia from the 22nd to 24th for a program at Mangrove Mountain.

Swami Atmabhishek conducted programs in Alleppey, Kerala, at NTPC's Kayamkulam Power Project from 24th March to 3rd April.

April

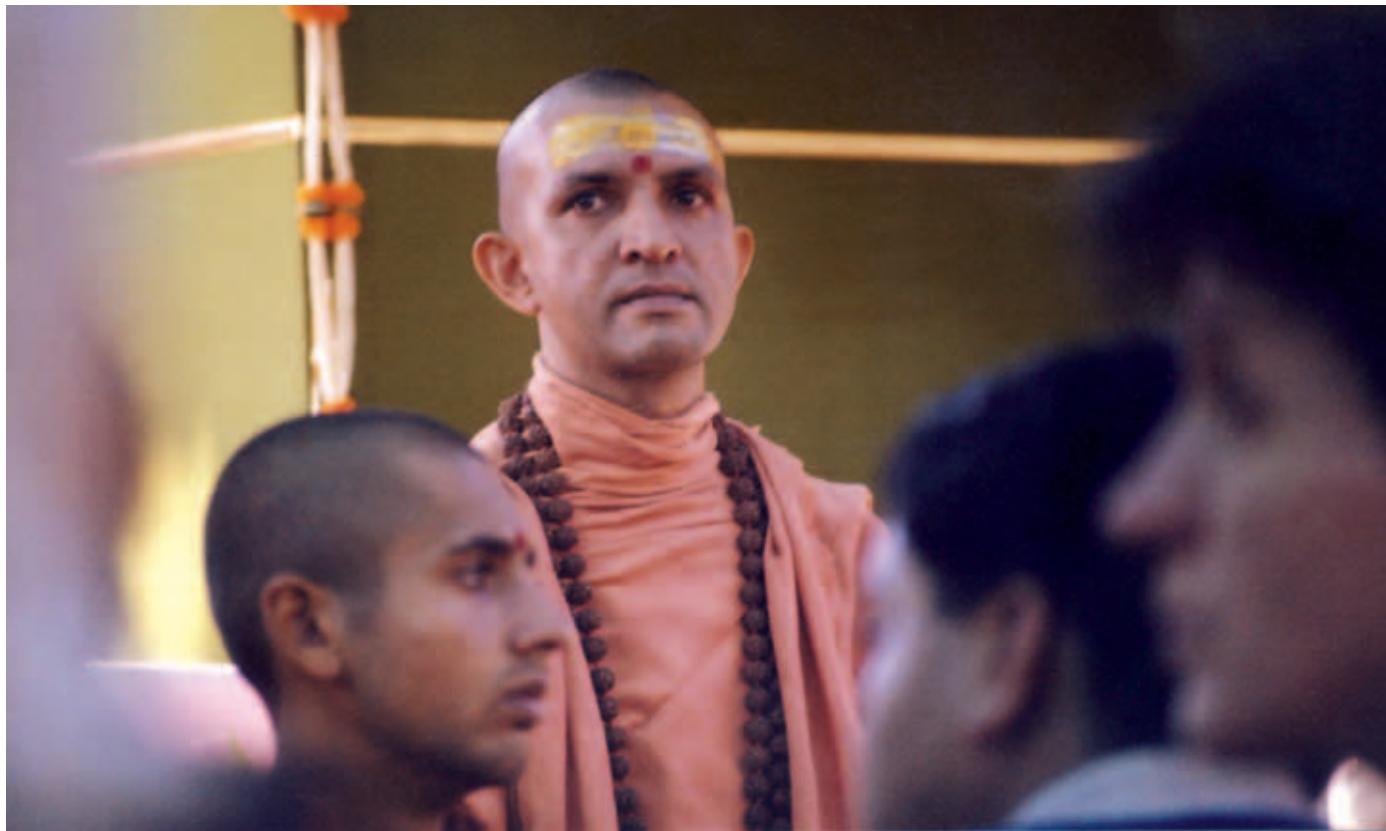
Swami Satyananda Yoga Ashramam, Vijayawada, conducted HMCs from the 1st to 30th, children's sessions in Harijanvada

from the 11th to 22nd, and three nine-day programs in May. Swami Satyananda visited the Divine Life Society in Rishikesh on the 4th and 5th with Swami Nirajan. On the 6th he travelled to Dehradun and met his gurubhai Swami Chidananda. In Haridwar, he met Swami Santoshananda Giri, bathed in the Ganga at Har-ki-Paudi and witnessed the Ganga Arati.

Navaratri was observed at Ganga Darshan from the 13th to 21st. Swami Nirajan gave discourses at Akshika Peeth, Chandisthan. YMM members held training sessions from the 13th to 21st and the 24th to 30th.

BYMM organized a Children's Introductory Yoga Festival in 39 Bhagalpur high schools from the 15th to 21st under the direction of Swami Omkarananda and Kumar Madhawan.

On the 28th, Swami Nirajan inaugurated the first 'Yoga Before



and After Class' program for BYMM in Saraswati Shishu Mandir, Bekapur.

BYMM propagators and instructors conducted classes in 23 villages from the 25th to 30th, organized by Sannyasi Chinmayananda.

A Diabetes Management Course was directed by Dr Swami Nirmalananda at Ganga Darshan from 28th April to 9th June.

Programs were held at Tekanpur, Gwalior, for the Central Training Academy of the Border Security Force from 29th April to 11th May by Swami Vigyanchaitanya and Sri Muktesh.

From April to June, Swami Maheshananda conducted seminars in South Korea, USA, Canada, Italy and Spain.

In April, Swami Yogaratna conducted seminars in Hong Kong and South Korea. On 15th and 16th June she conducted programs for Satyananda Yoga Kendra, Kolkata.

May

At Satyananda Ashram, Rajnandgaon, a children's camp was held from the 2nd to 10th by Sannyasi Yogarpan and Jignasu Shantirupa, and a 15-day camp for superintendents from Kanker district by Dr Sannyasi Paripoornananda.

At Satyananda Yoga Kendra, Pune, Sannyasi Karmarath and Dr Swanand Ghatpande conducted a program for 3,000 primary

teachers from the 2nd May to 8th June in association with the Maharashtra State Council of Education Research and Training. Yoga courses for employees of Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd were conducted at Ganga Darshan in May, June, July, September and October.

Swami Niranjana gave satsang in Ganga Sarai and Singhia on the 9th, and in Hemjapur and Suryagarha on the 10th, organized by YMM, Munger.

On the 11th, Swami Niranjana inaugurated a national seminar on 'The Environment and Downtrodden People' in Bihar and Jharkhand, sponsored by the University Grants Commission, at RD and DJ College, Munger.

Sannyasis Achyutananda and Atmatattwa toured Iran for the Yoga Association of Iran from the 14th May to 3rd June.

From the 17th to 21st and 23rd May to 9th June, Savita Mishra from BYMM conducted camps for Bihar teachers and principals.

Swami Atmabhishek conducted courses in Noida organized by the Central Government Pensioners Welfare Association from the 19th to 26th, and at Electra I.T. Pvt. Ltd., NEPZ, on the 23rd and 24th.

BYMM members conducted classes in Munger Jail from the 20th to 25th, and a yoga course for 2,555 children from 30th May to 2nd June at the Polo Ground, Munger.

250 volunteers from BYMM, BYMM, YMM, YMM and Mahila YMM, Munger, conducted relief work for Sivananda Math in Munger for families devastated by a fire in Tikarpur, Munger. From May to August, Dr Swami Shankardevananda conducted programs in the USA, and Rishi Vivekananda held seminars in 10 European countries.

June

During June and July, Swami Satyananda and Swami Niranjana went on a pilgrimage to Badrinath, accompanied by Swamis Gorakhnath and Suryaprakash. Sri Swamiji also visited his guru's ashram in Rishikesh.

From the 1st to 30th, students attended a course at Ganga Darshan organized by SPIC-MACAY with Sannyasi Mangalmurti. Swami Satyadharma gave programs in Australia from 1st June to 30th July, and in the USA and Greece in August.

Swami Atmabhishek conducted courses at IOC's Panipat Refinery from the 2nd to 9th.

From the 19th to 22nd, Swami Tyagraj conducted a workshop in Dehradun, Uttaranchal, for SPIC-MACAY.

July

BYMM propagators conducted courses from the 1st to 10th for 4,695 children in 11 schools.

Swami Satyananda Yoga Ashramam, Vijayawada, conducted courses from the 16th to 22nd, from the 26th to 30th in Chennai, and HMCs in July and August.

Swami Niranjana attended the Guru Poornima celebrations at Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh.

In Munger, Guru Poornima was celebrated on the 24th at Goenka Dharmashala.



August

YMM conducted an Introductory Yoga Course at Ganga Darshan during August and September.

Swami Atmabhishek conducted courses at NTPC's Gas Power Projects in Anta, Rajasthan, from the 4th to 18th and in Jhanor, Gujarat, from 25th August to 8th September.

Swami Bhaktichaitanya conducted radio programs from the 19th to 27th, and classes in Chennai from the 20th to 29th.

Jhoolan Utsav, the Festival of Swings, was celebrated at Paramahansa Alakh Bara, Rikha, from the 18th to 22nd.

At Ganga Darshan, members of Ghantali Mitra Mandal, Thane, attended a course from the 24th to 30th.

From the 26th, a one-week camp was conducted by Swami Yogaratna and Sannyasi Dharmapriya in Amboli village, MS.

September

From the 3rd to 9th, Swami Satyabindu from Sambalpur Ashram conducted two yoga camps organized by YMM, Gondia.

The annual five-day Foundation Day program was held at Ganga Darshan from 8th to 12th. Swami Niranjana conducted havan each morning and spoke on the papers presented by BYB faculty members. BYMM members also performed a play. Special guests were Sri V.K. Dubey, DM, Maulana Abdullah Bukhari and Sri A.K. Mukherjee.

Swami Sanyam conducted programs at Satyananda Ashram, Rajnandgaon, from the 8th to 17th in September and October, and for the Satyananda Yoga Centre, Mumbai, from 23rd to 29th September, including a retreat at Zirad village, Alibagh.

Gyandarshan Yogashram, Bhilai, conducted classes from the 10th September to 11th October in Durga district.

BYMM's Yoga Learning Group conducted an Introductory Yoga Course for 6,315 children from the 12th to 18th, organized on a regional and zonal basis. Sandhya Mishra was headquarters representative, Vikas Kumar coordinated the program and Kumar Vedvrat, Sheshnath Rakesh, Tejasvita, Kumar Madhwan and Sumit were regional leaders. On the 22nd the students met Swami Niranjana at Ganga Darshan and on the 29th he presented certificates to BYMM teachers and organizers.

Swamis Vigyanchaitanya and Suryaprakash conducted programs in Hyderabad at the National Police Academy from the 17th to 21st, and at Tecumseh India from the 22nd to 29th.

Swami Atmabhishek taught at the Army Public School, Noida, from 20th September to 1st October, and at the Community Centre from the 24th to 31st; in Gurgaon, Harayana, at the Management Development Institute from the 8th to 13th October; in Chattisgarh, organized by Kondagaon YMM, from the 19th to 31st October; at Tata Chemicals Ltd., Babrala, from the 11th to 18th November, and at Mathura Refinery Nagar from the 21st to 28th November.

Swami Satyananda Yoga Ashramam, Vijayawada, conducted a program at Rishi Valley and affiliated schools, Chittoor District, from the 22nd to 30th for 5,000 schoolchildren, 300 teachers, 500 parents and 1,000 villagers from seven schools and six villages.

Swami Yogaratna conducted programs hosted by Satyananda Yoga Kendra, Kolkata, from the 23rd to 28th.

A preparatory Kriya Yoga course and a beginner's Kriya Yoga course were held for students from Mumbai from 30th September to 4th October by Swamis Sumitrananda and Yogakanti as part of a three-year course.

October

Swami Satyananda Yoga Ashramam, Vijayawada, conducted programs from the 1st to 13th at Nava Jeevan ashram for street children and five HMCs in October and November.

YYMM conducted classes in Kharagpur.

On the 7th, Sannyasi Anandamangal from Atma Darshan Yogashram, Bangalore, taught at the Youth Leadership Camp, organized by Bangalore North Rotary.

Dr D.N. Singh of Rotary YYM, Muzaffarpur, conducted a program at Crystal Court, Kharghar, Navi Mumbai, from the 13th to 18th for the Oil and Natural Gas Commission.

A yoga camp was conducted at Narainpur, Bastar, CG, from the 18th to 30th by Swami Sureshwarananda and Jignasu Vishwanath, organized by Sannyasi Anandaswaroop of YMM, Kondagaon.

November

BYMM gave classes for over 1,000 parents from the 1st to 6th. The project was coordinated by Kumar Madhwan, Ankit and Sandhya Mishra. Swami Kaivalyananda presided at the closing ceremony.

The first convocation of BYB was held on the 12th at Ganga Darshan. Swami Niranjana presided as Chancellor of BYB. The chief guest was Padma Shri Dr Manoj Das, Prof of Literature, Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry, and guest of honour was HE, the Ambassador of the Republic of Colombia in India, Mrs Maria Clara Betancur. Departmental heads presented the 23 candidates to be awarded Master of Arts/Master of Science in examinations conducted by BYB for 2000–2002



courses and Swami Shankarananda, BYB Vice-Chancellor, conferred the degrees. The Vice-Chancellor of Tilka Manji Bhagalpur University, Dr Ramashraya Yadav, conferred MA/MSc degrees on the 33 candidates from 1998–2000 and 1999–2001 when BYB was affiliated to Bhagalpur. Swami Niranjana, Dr Manoj Das, Prof Ramashraya Yadav and Prof. M.Q. Tauheed, ex-Vice-Chancellor, TM Bhagalpur University, addressed the convocation.

From the 13th to 20th, a camp was held at Kalyan Mahavidyalaya by Gyandarshan Yogashram, Bhilai. Chhattisgarh Health Minister, Sri Bhupesh Bhagel, was chief guest.

A yoga camp sponsored by Akaltara Lions Club was conducted at the Kirtan Bhavan from the 25th November to 3rd December by Jignasu Dharmakirti.

December

Rajasooya Yajna was conducted at the Alakh Bara, Rikhia, from the 5th to 9th with Sat Chandi Mahayajna and Sita Kalyanam. After the installation, invocation and worship of Chandi, chanting of Ramayana Path and Durga Saptashati took place each day with kirtan, arati and distribution of prasada of utensils (patra) to over 50 villages around Rikhia and to thousands of devotees from all over India and the world. The yajna was further charged by Sri Swamiji's arrival on the fifth day, after the completion of his anushtana, and the presence of the Divine Mother was felt by all.

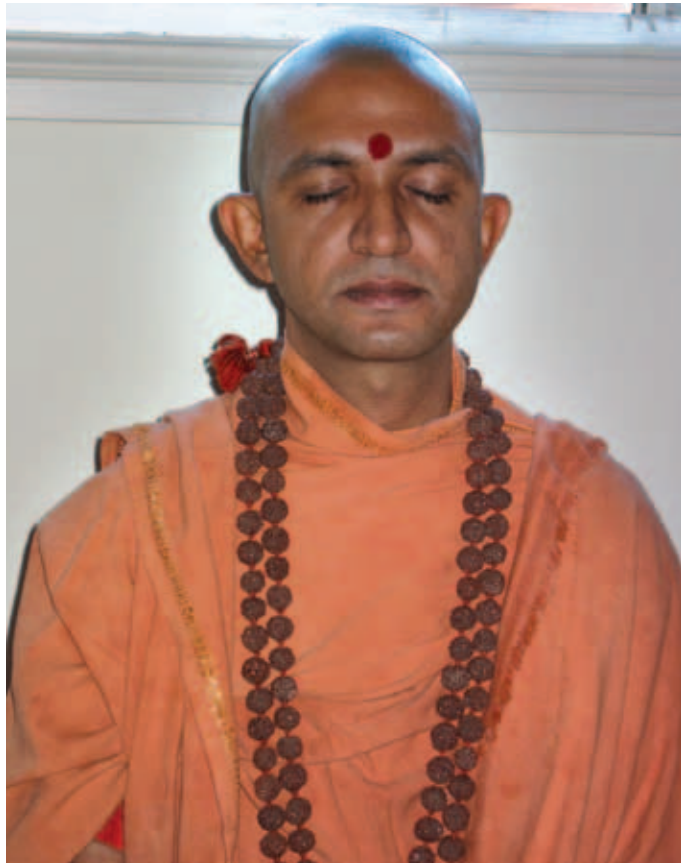
A Mantra Sadhana Course was held at Ganga Darshan from the 12th to 17th by Swamis Satyadharma, Vigyanchaitanya, Yogakanti, Sambuddhananda, and Yogaratna.

On the 22nd, Swami Niranjana announced a one-year Yoga Doot, yoga messenger, program for YYMM to be conducted monthly by BSY sannyasins, BYB staff and interns, and senior YYMM members.

Swami Niranjana conducted a Yoga Samagam in Patna from the 27th to 29th, organized by Antarashtriyaa YMM. He also gave classes at Mandapam, a South Indian Cultural Centre, and at Naga Baba Thakurbari, Kadamkuan.



Swami Niranjan conducted an extensive program in Mumbai this year for a 'Yoga Festival'. During the visit he also addressed 750 scientists, technocrats and executives at Bhabha Atomic Research Centre. He gave inspiring discourses on yoga's impact on personal transformation and taught pratyahara practices, gave initiations, visited the State Mental Hospital where he addressed patients, doctors and staff members, and addressed a large congregation. At a residential retreat at Godavari Darshan Ashram near Nasik, Swamiji delivered six stunning discourses as a commentary on *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra* and conducted dharana sessions based on the text.



Another big program this year was the Akhil Bharatiya Yoga Mahotsava in Kolkata. It was inaugurated at Sangeet Kala Mandir by A.K. Mathur, Hon. Chief Justice, Kolkata High Court. Swami Niranjan gave satsang, presented research material and taught pratyahara practices. He also presided over interactive sessions for doctors, yoga teachers, physiotherapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, educationalists, teachers and other professionals.

This year, during the annual five-day Foundation Day program from 8th to 12th September, papers were presented every day by faculty members of the different Departments. Each day, Swamiji focused on the purpose of each line of enquiry. On the last day he concluded with an overview of all the presentations. On the 12th, a play was presented by BYMM on religious integration and tolerance.

At the first Convocation of Bihar Yoga Bharati in November, the chief guest was Padma Shri Dr Manoj Das, Professor of Literature, Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry, and the guest of honour was Her Excellency, the Ambassador of the Republic of Colombia in India, Mrs Maria Clara Betancur. After a havan and the chanting of vedic stotras, degrees were conferred to the candidates dressed in white dhotis and kurtas, anga vastrams with the BYB logo, colourful Rajasthani waistcoats and head scarves, which made quite a picture.

In an inspiring address Swamiji said that the first Convocation of Bihar Yoga Bharati was an historic event, as it was the first time in thousands of years that degrees had been awarded in a subject that was both academic and spiritual. He called upon the new degree holders to develop the seed of yoga planted within them by developing humility, integrity, serenity, honesty, truthfulness, love and compassion, to be a light unto themselves, and to make a sankalpa to help others recognize their inner worth and strength for the creation of a better life and society.

Swamiji's frequent travels now meant that his presence at Ganga Darshan was a rare gift. But most of us realized that this only helped strengthen the connection.

"So, you people at Ganga Darshan are having to learn to live without Swamiji's constant presence just like the rest of us?" said one of the European disciples as we gathered to have lunch on the terraced gardens near the kitchen one day in 2002. Swamiji was going to join us for lunch today.

"Swamiji is always here." I replied in a grand manner. "In fact, he's often a lot more here when he's away, you know that."

"The three ambassadors of yoga, Dr Rishi Vivekananda, Dr Swami Shankardevananda and Swami Satyadharma are out to guide the Satyananda Yoga movement in Europe, America and Australia respectively," said Swami Yogawandana, who runs Editing and knows the news. "Even so the demands on him are increasing."

"However," I said reflectively, "there are noticeably fewer grumbles from the swamis about his absences because everyone can see the situation is becoming impossible. With only one body issued to him he just can't be with his guru on pilgrimage, in Rikhia supervising the activities of SM with Swami Satsangi, in Ganga Darshan guiding BSY and BYB with Swamis Kaivalyananda and Shankarananda, spending 'quality time' with the children of all the diverse children's groups, fulfil his touring schedule in India and abroad and be with us full time in Ganga Darshan – or can he?"

"We want to help but we're pinned seven days a week by the relatively minor tasks of our own responsibilities. Most of the swamis just watch as Swamiji slowly disappears from view for longer periods of time. And even when he is in Ganga Darshan, this year he is spending more and more time on the sixth floor in isolation."

"Even when he spends the mornings sitting on the front lawn for his office work and interviews, he is surrounded by such determined circles of VIPs, devotees, 'in-charges', Alsatian dogs and paperwork that the best thing, obviously, is not to add your own demands and needs to the pile. Still, people appreciate seeing him there under the big, brightly tasselled umbrella, occasionally getting up for a stretch between groups

of people's departure and arrival, or slipping off with one of the gardening or construction swamis to different sites around the ever-transforming campus."

"So what's the point? What's the result of all this?" the traveller enquired.

"The result? Well, a breakthrough really. Not having the heart to further stretch our beloved leader, we actually have had to cooperate with each other to full capacity. Seeing him working so hard, we also did self-enquiry and steeled our resolve to surrender and let the divine energy flow through, as it does from time to time as we go through our sadhana again and again."

"The world is in a strange state. Sannyasi Vishvamurti knows a lot about astrology, and you know jyotish is known in India as the 'eye of the Veda'. She says we are coming out of a protracted difficult period on all levels."

"From the fragments of the world-hype penetrating the ashram's walls, it does seem terrorism is at large."

"You're right, but good things are still happening on the planet. Rishi Vivekananda can give his first-hand account of the yoga movement that is growing in the new Europe that is searching for peace after years of war. There is enough material prosperity; now people are searching for spiritual values."

"We were wondering how your tour of Europe went," I remarked to Rishi Vivekananda. "We'll need to say something about it in *Past, Present and, Future*, you know. It's really a breakthrough having you and Shankardev and Satyadharma roaming the globe as Yoga Ambassadors."

"Well, I can show you the report I sent Swami Niranjan if you like – it really was a wonderful experience," he replied heartily. "Better still, I'll put it on a floppy for you – how about that?"

"Ah, so nice to work with a Rishi," I thought.

Hari Om Swamiji

"Please find below an outline of my programs in Europe; in the Netherlands, this seminar on 'Addiction and Gurkul' at the beginning of April was, as you know, a great success, attended by virtually all of the Satyananda people in Europe. Right from the very beginning, everybody was bright and full of the joy of life and yoga, and that momentum just increased. About 300 attended, all the lectures were appreciated, and Shankardev and I did a dual comedy act on stage that had them all laughing throughout the event.

In Greece, the first week or so was low key, and gave my chest time to enjoy the warm Aegean weather. Then followed programs on the beautiful island of Corfu. Then Athens, Salonika, Larissa, Kavala and Drama. Many of these were with Swami Sivamurti. She and I made a good team, we are good friends, and she is knowledgeable and presents very well. But the most important thing is that there was no ego problem.

Then Bulgaria, and this was the surprise! Many people in the democratic world still have the image of the old Communist Bulgaria, as an oppressed, grey, miserable bad-land, under the iron boot of the Stalinist horror. Hardly anybody dreams of the reality of Bulgaria now. The countryside is beautiful and green, the mountains and seaside region to the east are as beautiful as those anywhere in the world. The people are open, natural, humorous, intelligent, and willing to embrace yoga as a possible lifestyle. We started with a three-day seminar for about 120 eager aspirants, to introduce the Yoga Studies 1 planned in Greece in August. Most of them are just starting yoga; their limited ability with English is the only problem I can see.

After Sivamurti and her group left, I had more time to get to know the local Satyananda people, my worthy caretakers and good mates Vivekamurti, Shrutigyna and Ganesh. We travelled for the next six days and had a great time. I did programs in Pleven (a small city of about 200,000), Plovdiv (the second biggest city of about 500,000) and Pamporovo (an alpine village, ski-resort in winter).

The itinerary on the trip was busy enough, lectures most nights, generally around the topics; 'How to Increase Our Vitality and Manage Our Mind Better', etc. One evening in Plovdiv the lecture was in a concert theatre with 300 capacity and the overflow of people were standing. The organizers, headed by Jignasu Nadamani, got their act together there, and pulled the crowds and a real highlight was the TV, radio and print media interviews they arranged. The interviewers were mainly very smart women, a number of them also medicos, asking really meaningful questions about life, health, our spiritual roots, and so on. These people are a long way past the 'yoga for slimness and beauty' mentality; they are really looking into it as their valid new direction.





In Sofia, I spoke to about 12 yoga teachers about teaching yoga, lectured at the New University about 'Evolving One's Personality with Yoga', in a full sized lecture theatre to an audience with people standing around the walls and sitting on every available bit of floor space. Well received, with some searching questions in the last half-hour (the lecture sessions have all been for two hours). The next day I had a lecture in the evening to a strong medical contingent, on 'Principles of Yoga Therapy'.

Two things impressed me in Bulgaria, the natural openness and humour of the people in general, and the good organization

of the programs. The main initiates there are a harmonious team, obviously good friends, and attract a group of younger people who are willing to pitch in and help in a reliable way. I enjoyed every minute.

The next day, after two more interviews, I flew to Mallorca, and the next thrilling episode of the Viv Saga. The highlight of this was the leg between Zurich and Barcelona. The plane flew down just parallel to the snow-covered Swiss Alps on the left, with the sun setting on the right and the sunset reflecting on the snow was absolutely spectacular. Arrived in Mallorca in the middle of the night and the little Satyananda crew there took me to a beautiful new small hotel in the middle of nowhere – total tranquillity. We did a weekend seminar in their country ashram on 'Mental Peace, Personal Growth', then visited the beach, with beautiful azure Mediterranean waters and sandflies. Then at night a lecture on 'Living Life with the Help of Yoga' to another overflow of audience in quite a big auditorium. In Barcelona, a seminar to a group of 25 teachers and students in Ananta's yoga studio, then Spain was brought to a standstill by a nation-wide strike, so I was reluctantly forced to spend a sunny summer day by the beach at Barcelona.

The 21st June was the longest day for the northern hemisphere of Planet Earth, and also for Rishi Vivekananda. The Spanish strike seemed infectious. Europe was chaotic and flights were delayed for hours. The upshot was that I was stranded for six hours in a very crowded, rowdy departure terminal in Munich. The ventilation system seemed to have joined the strike too; all the hundreds of people madly puffing their last before the nicotine starvation of their delayed flights. Needless to say, by the time I got to Belgrade after midnight, my chest sounded like a sick motorbike back-firing, and my lungs felt like those I saw as a medical student in bottles of formaldehyde in the Pathology Museum. After a week of fine weather in Belgrade, with my room backing into a forest, it settled, and has done the rest of the trip nicely.

Serbia was the next surprise! The people there were delightful –friendly, humorous, serious about their yoga, and devoted to Sri

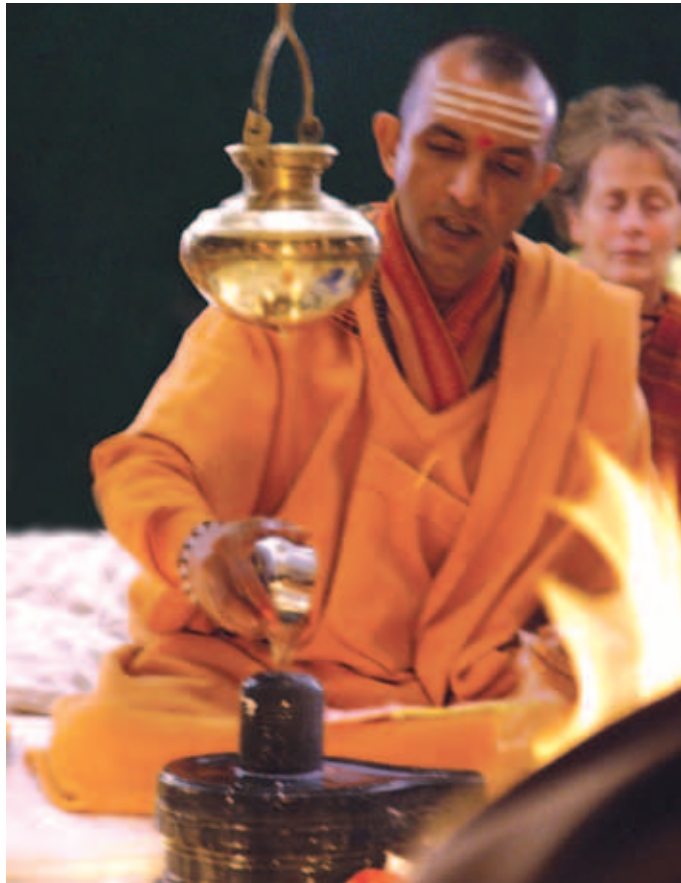
Swamiji, you and Swami Sivamurti, and some have been to Rikhia and Munger. The programs each night were all well attended, and the organizers took very good care of me. Bhagavati and Saraswati took me everywhere. Apparently Russian was the enforced second language during the Communist regime, but when that ended in 1989, English replaced it in the schools. That and the many American and British movies they watch has honed Serbian English nicely. The programs in Belgrade were on many topics such as living yogic lifestyle and 'Yoga and the Problems of Young People – Suicide and Drug Addiction', etc.

I arrived in Germany, and Swami Harishakti's beautiful big country ashram in the hinterland near Lake Constance. The



mountain just nearby is actually in Austria. On the weekend I did a seminar on 'Becoming Conscious of and Healing the Injuries of the Personality by Yoga' to about 30 enthusiastic students, including another psychiatrist. At first they were a bit subdued, but by the first afternoon they were very friendly and singing kirtans with the same gusto as the Aussies. We had a lot of fun. On the Saturday the German Football Team was playing the final of the World Cup (only happens every four years) so there was interest there, but I didn't bring them any luck, they lost to Brazil.

On Sunday afternoon I moved to Uberlingen. The drama of that little sojourn was not my lecture on 'Meditation and Personal Growth'. It was the collision of two airliners in the



middle of the night, right over my head. Fortunately it happened ten kilometres up and none of the bits fell on me, although they were scattered around nearby. In Bremen, right up at the top of Germany, I was greeted by Swami Chandrajyoti. After I gave the lecture 'Depression in Cancer Patients and their Families' at the University of Bremen, she and I agreed that I had given yoga programs from one end of Germany to the other (though nowhere in the middle).

Then Birmingham in Britain with at least 150 people for a lecture and the hospitality of Swami Satyaprakash who had ably coordinated the programs around England, and ferried me around for most of it. Thursday 4th of July, it was the 25th anniversary of my departure from Oz with Swami Satyananda and you, to start my nine-year parivrajaka. Next, Nottingham for stress management programs organized by Sannyasi Amarjyoti, with about 50 health professionals and a more general audience. Then London and the lovely Swami Pragyamurti with about 100 mainly experienced yoga people for sessions on 'Yoga, the Chakras and the Mind'.

Then it was two more programs at the University of Birmingham on 'The Koshas: The Five Dimensions of the Human' to about 50 yoga teachers, then in the afternoon 'Yoga in the Treatment of Trauma and Stress' to about 60 people who were going to be mainly health professionals except that most of the morning people came again. Straight after that, in Godalming, Surrey, another program on koshas arranged by Swami Dayamurti, this time to about 90 people who were mostly yoga teachers or students from different traditions including the British Wheel of Yoga. Then, in Horley, 'The Chakras and the Mind' arranged by my good mate Swami Vedantananda. All in all, the British tour was busy, well attended, and went without a hitch. Satyaprakash organized it very well and was a fun travelling companion.

In France, Swami Divyaprem was my host on the French Riviera, and took us on a little tour of Monte Carlo and an old village in the mountains. The village was beautiful, but Monte Carlo is an ugly disaster area all squeezed into some small bays.



I have been to just about all the celebrated beach places over the years, and I have chosen the clear winner – Diamond Beach, Australia! I gave seminars on the chakras at Divyaprem's centre, which has a beautiful panoramic view of the Mediterranean.

Then up to Paris and the friendship of Swami Yogabhakti. I only had one day in Paris, what a shame; it must be the most beautiful city in the world! It was their Bastille Day, so the city was bedecked with flags and marches. Everybody was having a wonderful time except their President Mr Chirac who narrowly dodged an assassin's bullet. I gave my lecture to about 40 yoga teachers and Swami Yogabhakti escorted me to the airport, but

the drama hadn't finished. It seems someone had planted a bomb right near where I had to check in. There were police everywhere, the place was cleared and cordoned off, and from a distance I later saw two men in black uniforms with black gloves, gingerly wheeling away a thing about the size of a shoebox rolled in a grey blanket. I am still contemplating how the gloves or the blanket would have protected them if the bomb had gone off. Eventually, after a thoroughly enjoyable four hours among the smoke and din of the airport, I arrived back in the ashram in Greece, glad to be back out in the countryside again.

The seminar at the ashram in Greece was titled 'Yoga and the Healing Sciences', and I gave lectures over four days to about



30 or so people on topics ranging from 'Yoga and Depression', to 'Living a Healthy and Happy Life with Yoga'. I suppose I was a natural choice to give these ones, because I have certainly been loving life, and have been healthy and happy. The numbers swelled to about 100 people to celebrate Guru Poornima and the whole two days was really moving, and encouraged me to reflect on the indescribable beauty Swami Satyananda has brought into my life. The grace just flows all the time and carries me along in its loving arms. I have a little cry more often nowadays, but the tears are of gratitude and love.

In Italy I dropped in on Swami Ishananda's lovely big farmhouse in the countryside near Turin. Perfect place for a weekend seminar for the usual 30 aspirants. It commenced with a public lecture on 'Therapy of Illness – A Yogic Viewpoint' in a beautiful old church that is being restored, attended by all the local dignitaries. The weekend continued with practices, lectures, satsangs, kirtans, etc. My lectures were clustered around 'Personality Development with Yoga, and the Prevention of Illness'. On the Sunday evening Swami Anandananda drove me over to his lovely place in Montescudo, on the Italian East Coast.

Then I flew to Cologne to be with my dear friend Swami Prakashananda, and give a lecture on 'Yoga and Health' in her ashram in a lovely apartment in the city. The highlight for me was the Dom, that magnificent medieval cathedral – one of the most beautiful works of architecture in the world. Its majestic spires dominate the whole city.

Then Greece again and the two Yoga Studies 1 courses: one in Athens in English, and one in the ashram in Thessaloniki in Greek – translated by Poornananda. What impressed me about the English medium course in Athens (and indeed the Netherlands Conference at the beginning), was the harmony of the groups of people, most of them from nations that had until recently been killing each other. Their common language is English, and their affiliation is to the Yoga Family. I felt I was seeing a small example of where the world is headed, as yoga expands to become 'a mighty world power that will change the course of world events', as Sri Swamiji said years ago.



Another big surprise – a short stopover in Croatia on the way back to India. Swami Yogapadma greeted me on arrival, an amazing lady, and what a life of experience. But what a stressful life those people of Croatia have had. They have peace at last; their economy is in bad shape, but their spirit is strong and they are looking ahead eagerly. Though I could literally feel their deep pain, they were friendly, enthusiastic and knowledgeable. The countryside down there on the Istria Peninsula is as good as any in the world, with pine forests going right down to beaches with aquamarine water. It is a pristine area. I hope the increasing tourism treats it kindly. The weekend seminar was in beautiful Pula on the Adriatic Sea on evolving the personality with yoga, then a public lecture for 130 people. Yogapadma also gave an excellent lecture, we all enjoyed it.



Then Tuesday saw me return to Amsterdam, greeted once again by Swamis Savitananda and Suryamitra, my generous hosts for the next two days. I had completed a most enjoyable and inspiring European circuit. Now for India and the future."

Rishi Vivekananda's chronicle illustrates the attitude we find in nearly all of our BYB students: a feeling for global unity that transcends limited nationalism. There is a working interest in understanding other cultures and in maintaining the values of *ahimsa*, non-violence in thought, word and deed.

"The new Academy (SYAE) is part of the next stage of Swami Niranjan's vision for teaching Satyananda Yoga in Europe," I hazarded. "It aims to make Satyananda Yoga more widely

available, to support Satyananda Yoga teachers and students, and ensure Satyananda Yoga is taught authentically. There are links with the SYA in Australia too."

"Like BYB, the academies aren't just restricted to academic theoretical knowledge; it includes the whole experience of living with and being trained in an environment maintained by guru. Go there if you need the chance to experience an ashram environment, and have too many obligations to be able to come to India very often. All the courses require residential stays and a full-time residential option is available. It's not exactly gurukul, but it's the next step."

"I've just been hearing about the adventure that Sannyasis Achyutananda and Atmatattwa had in Iran too," my other companion said enthusiastically. "You know, how we've been having groups coming here regularly? Apparently there's a really big interest in yoga starting up there now."

"Thanks largely to the efforts of Sannyasi Anandajyoti," volunteered Swami Krishnapriya who looks after YPT and the publishing work. "He came first and has been translating all our books. Yoga is now recognized as a natural part of Iran's ancient Zoroastrian tradition. The aim is to introduce yoga as a holistic science that can be integrated into Iranian culture."

"Those doctors who came this year seemed to fit into the ashram straightaway – dedicated, a very cultured group."

"When Swamiji presented their certificates, he welcomed them into the Satyananda Yoga family and said these courses marked the start of a new era for yoga in Iran."

"Yes, they had a special course designed to enable them to start a Yoga Therapy Association and Clinic in Tehran. Dr Swamis Nirmalananda and Mudraroop, Swamis Satyadharma, Sumitrananda, Sannyasis Atmatattwa and Karmayogini all taught, giving practical and theoretical approaches to yogic diagnosis and treatment of common diseases."

"True. Achyutananda, what's been happening? It was your first Iranian visit, wasn't it?"

Yoga in the Islamic Republic of Iran

"First there was the six-week visit by 39 Iranians to BYB, that group was mainly doctors and medical professionals and some really good musicians too. Then Atmatattwa and I had the good fortune to get an invitation from Sannyasi Sadhanabindu to participate in a 23-day Iranian tour on behalf of the Yoga Association of Iran."

First stop was Tehran and a 4 am tour of the city, with a quick introduction to Iranian driving! Later that day, Shiraz in the south, city of roses, Sufis and poets, where the First International Yoga Congress of Iran was held on the 14th and 15th of May hosted by the Fars Yoga Association. Over 800 attended, including many doctors, scientists and yoga teachers. Srinivasan, who has run



Sivananda Ashrams in the US for the last 20 years, was the other speaker from overseas. The venue was a large municipal hall and, due to the Islamic laws, mixed practical classes were not allowed so this congress was strictly lectures only. We did, however, manage to include a short practical session in one of our lectures with people sitting in their chairs. We termed it 'chair yoga'. The guests of honour included ministers from the Fars Sports Authorities. Sannyasi Anandajyoti presented them with 23 Satyananda Yoga publications each, which he has translated into Farsi.

A day of sightseeing took us to the tombs of the famous Sufis and their disciples and the great poets Hafez and S'adi, plus the



2,000-year-old historical site of Persepolis. While in Shiraz, there was a worldwide day of Mahamrityunjaya mantra chanting for the benefit of spiritual aspirants so we, with Srinivasan and some Iranian students, contributed 108 rounds. We also gave a presentation at the Ministry of Education Authorities of Fars province to 45 education consultants, psychologists and senior professors. The role of Satyananda Yoga in education was the main topic, and the activities of RYE in Europe and BYMM in India were outlined.

We then flew to Tehran for a lunchtime meeting arranged by the Head of the Yoga Therapy Research Team at Tehran University of Medical Science, with the Vice Chancellor of Science and Culture, the Head of Scientific Research for Students and the Head of the Sports Therapy Team of Tehran University. The VC and Dr Zafarghandi expressed the desire for a long collaboration on yoga and sports therapy research and for yoga therapists from BYB to come to give specialized training programs for doctors and researchers. A lively two-hour round table discussion followed for 40 medical students, psychologists, biologists and

teachers. Topics included BYB, yoga for therapy, mental health and emotional management, and yoga for students.

Later a meeting to discuss yoga and rehabilitation took place with Hasseium Degokam, founder of AFTAB, an NGO drug rehabilitation society with 14 branches, a two-hour practice workshop with 200 addicts sitting in chairs, and an open question and answer session. The response was very warm and enthusiastic, Mr Degokam expressed enthusiasm in the future use of yoga as part of the rehabilitation process in Iran where opiate addiction is a chronic social problem.

On the 20th May, a three-hour workshop was organized for 60 yoga teachers and students at the Shakeri Institute Yoga Centre. The next day started with a visit to Dr Mohammed Eyvasi at the Nava Scientific Institute, a holistic medical clinic, research and yoga centre for a three-hour program including yoga nidra for students and staff, a meeting with several doctors from the research team to discuss protocols for scientific yoga research projects, and a beautifully presented vegetarian lunch. Later that

day we had a breathtaking (in more ways than one) drive to Dizim in the Alborz Mountains that separate Tehran from the Caspian Sea and arrived at a Himalayan-like holiday ski resort, 3,000 feet high. People came from all over Iran, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Armenia; 200 women and 50 men attended the three-day intensive residential seminar introducing Satyananda Yoga with early morning classes, lectures, yoga nidra, meditation and questions and answers.

Another breathtaking drive to Tehran airport, then Esfahan, the old capital of Persia, where we were welcomed by Anandadhara and other members of the Esfahan Yoga Association. After some exceptional sightseeing encompassing astonishing architecture from the 16th century and visiting astoundingly refined and beautiful 700-year-old mosques, it was a three-hour bus drive

through desert wilderness and mountains to reach the idyllic setting of Chardagh, a quiet, steel workers' holiday resort, with octagonal wooden cabins overlooking a startlingly stunning vista of snow-capped mountains and a vast turquoise lake that had us thinking of Lake Manasarovar, near Mount Kailash.

This was the venue for another two-day residential seminar, again introducing the techniques of Satyananda Yoga to 60 women and 15 men. Of mixed experience. A particularly positive outcome was that following reports in the press about yoga classes, a government representative was ordered by the Sports Authorities to check what was happening. After listening to a few sessions, she then actively participated and experienced a very powerful therapeutic effect. At the closing ceremony she stated that she would recommend yoga to her superiors, as



well as to the sports authorities throughout Iran, and that yoga should be wholeheartedly promoted in Iran.

Next was a 400-km drive through the sizzling desert to the city of Yazd. The founder of the Yazd Yoga Association had visited Munger six years ago and made the sankalpa that representatives from BYB would one day come to his town. On the 23rd of May, a three-hour congress, attended by 250 people including many doctors and educationalists, was held in the Government City Hall, where all major decisions are sanctified by the authorities. Sannyasi Atmatattwa talked about BYB and the social applications of yoga in India and the West, whilst I

spoke about yoga and addictions and then gave a short sitting relaxation practice. The organizers were delighted that the Chief of Physical Education for the entire Yazd province attended and recommended that future programs should include some practical sessions. The congress was filmed by the National Television Company and was considered successful in helping to raise awareness and acceptance of yoga in Iran.

Mashad, the 'Mecca' of Iran, being their holiest pilgrimage site and city in the country, draws millions from all over the Islamic world to the sacred tomb of Imam Reza, the 8th spiritual leader, martyred in the 14th century. We were very privileged to be taken there by our close escorts Sannyasi Sadhanabindu and Mr Sharifi. We went at 2.30 am thinking it would be quieter, but it was still packed with fervent, praying pilgrims. One of the massive domes glows permanently due to being coated in pure gold leaf.

The ceilings inside are a spectacular kaleidoscope of light entirely covered in mirrored glass; truly one of the wonders of the world.

A three-hour congress was held in the Mayors Sports Stadium. Atmatattwa spoke on BYB and the social applications of yoga, an acrobatic display of yoga was given by the Mashad Yoga Association, followed, in contrast, with myself giving a 25-minute practical demonstration of Pawanmuktasana part 1 and relaxation with antar mouna. It was received with loud cheers and whistles by the enthusiastic crowd of 800! The Islamic News Agency and the Islamic Students' News Agency interviewed me and the congress was filmed for national television. The next day, Atmatattwa conducted a one-day intensive workshop entitled 'Deepening Awareness through Satyananda Yoga Techniques' for 35 women at a private medical and yoga centre. Simultaneously, I was teaching practical sessions elsewhere in the town for the men.

The last day and a flight to Tehran for morning meditation with the Chief Administrator and the Secretary General of the Iranian Olympic Committee to discuss the use of yoga in sports who concluded they would like to sponsor representatives from BYB to give training sessions and workshops to their coaches and athletes. Our last sessions were two three-hour practical workshops conducted in a large prayer room, divided of course by a thick curtain for 15 women and 10 men who were professors, medical and research students from Tehran University, followed by an hour of lively questions and answers.

We are most grateful to everyone in the Yoga Association of Iran who worked so hard to provide an extraordinary opportunity to help spread Satyananda Yoga from door to door. The Iranian people are warm and friendly, generous and extremely interested in yoga. The friendships formed will



remain in our hearts. There is enormous scope for teaching there. We hope to return."

The wave of yoga is spreading through the world's different countries and religions; I would say yoga is now a force influencing the course of world events," my companion said judiciously, "and Swamiji is at the epicentre. Really, he needs more swamis to keep up with the pace of the work now. How is that Sannyasa Course shaping up?"

"Well, we thought it was one year," I replied, "but it seems to be infinitely extendable."

Report on Sannyasa Training Course

"It was in Hindi, started officially on Guru Poornima 2001, and from over 150 applicants, 108 students survived the first few weeks as new arrivals faced Swami Niranjan's first surprises.



One of these was his instruction that all participants must shave their heads; a surprising number of both men and women thought their hair more important than a sannyasa course. Perhaps because the entrance form specified that after three months some people would be asked to leave the course, some had joined just to experiment, but Swamiji was making it clear that commitment is necessary for sannyasa. All participants were to wear white, yellow or geru according to initiation. The sight of them, clean and radiant each morning in white, yellow and geru has made a lasting impression.

Another surprise was that all participants slept in old BSY, the Sivananda Ashram. This stopped some people in their tracks – literally. The simpler accommodation, for the most part in dormitories rather than rooms, and the daily walks to



and from Ganga Darshan added an element of physical tapasya and broke down expectations of an international venue.

The emotional fervour of Guru Poornima, and the hard work in its wake, ended and Swami Niranjan took up the reins of the course in earnest. The remaining aspirants were trained via various activities involving hard work in the ashram, notably garden, kitchen and publications duties. From the first, karma yoga constituted the backbone of the course; working without expectation of reward. At first that was all, then slowly things expanded.

Swamiji remained somewhat aloof. Satsangs were sometimes regular and sometimes few and far between and often missed by the sannyasa course as they were on special karma yoga duties or simply on a different campus at the time. But each of his satsangs was treasured and participants became very focused on him and on their duties.

Then half of the course was transferred to Ganga Darshan, the female members crowded happily into the two common rooms of Shakti Vihar, while 20 of the men moved into the Swagatam Building at the front gate. Newly completed, it is a lovely and surprising three-storey structure, white, with porthole windows and a bathroom with the best views in Bihar. An interesting feature was that this was the only functioning bathroom in the building, thus aiding the male students in perfecting yogic mudras and bandhas. New timetables were drawn up.

After three months, some chose to leave and others were advised to. This had been part of the initial agreement but caused some upset. Although the course was very demanding, the spirit and involvement was also very high and it was often very difficult to accept that other duties were calling them outside the ashram.

Navaratri, and Swamiji challenged the aspirants to move deeper into sannyasa lifestyle. No phone calls, no letters, no leave to visit family any more till the end of the course. Navaratri Sadhana was then commenced and the energy build-up was remarkable, beginning with the chanting of the 32 names of Durga each morning under the stars outside Main Building. The eyes were closed under starlight and opened after the invocation of the Mother in the earliest pure light of dawn; an unforgettable experience.

After this period of intense sadhana the weather also changed and on 5th November, Swamiji personally selected blankets for course members and authorized the distribution of warm clothes as they had arrived in the full heat of summer, and the curtailment of home leave was a development few had foreseen. Early morning class, now APMB, continued outside until icy early morning fogs made the demonstrator invisible, and we finally found a classroom left over from the BYB classes.





Yoga nidra classes began to alternate with japa and antar mouna. When their regular teachers disappeared, the more experienced students began to fill in. When they were sent out to help with preparatory sessions for conventions, classes in prisons, health camps and so forth, others stepped forward.

The ashram was now full as BYB's four-month English Certificate Course had commenced and about 25 nationalities were represented on campus. Satsangs were mostly in English, another challenge for the Hindi Sannyasa Course. It was heartening to see the manner in which they stuck faithfully to their discipline and hard karma yoga schedule despite the many distractions offered in such an environment. And before things got a little out of balance or unfocused, Swamiji would call an unexpected, fiery and uplifting satsang or change the schedule in some subtle way which ensured everybody got their focus back very quickly. It was fun, and very challenging.

Everyone was looking forward intensely to the December yajna in Rikhia. It happened. The work was intense and continuous and many experienced a reality shift at that time with new dimensions opening up. Being with Swamiji and Sri Swamiji demonstrated the heart of sannyasa.

Back in Ganga Darshan, Swamiji again advised some to leave the course and return to civil life. About 40 aspirants remained, and these survivors were accommodated in Ganga Darshan anywhere there was space. Once again the course shifted gear. Morning class was resumed. A Pranayama Research Project began on January 6th so practices were revised thoroughly. Students who were more established in sadhana were sent to Kolkata and experienced an intense six weeks, assisting with classes around the city in preparation for Swamiji's Convention.

Then he began another sort through, determining those that should stay. Now the course numbers had become quite small,



and Swamiji also was outside of the ashram a great deal. The last 'one year' Sannyasa Course, in 1996, had finished unexpectedly after nine months and some felt that really this course was already finishing. But the group that remained were told that, actually, it was now beginning.

On the 22nd Swamiji moved to Ananda Bhavan, much to the delight of the Sannyasa Course students there, and proceeded to give informal classes morning and evening with satsangs, talks, and at last the chance to meet him in a quiet informal setting. Throughout May the Sannyasa Course worked extra hard while BYB students tried to calm their 'exams mean stress' conditioning. In June, BYB holidays commenced and the ashram emptied out. The swadhyaya classes ended, yoga nidra was only held on the weekends and the news was that Swami Satyananda and Swamiji were roaming through the Himalayas on a pilgrimage. The Sannyasa Course had been scheduled to end on June the 30th, but was Swamiji going to be here? And what about initiations?

No, he wasn't present in the ashram, but sent a message that the course was to end on Guru Poornima, as it had begun. Fine. Those that could adjusted their plans and stayed on, while some left reluctantly, having obligations that had come up during the year.

Swamiji returned and called a meeting. He advised the remaining participants to decide whether they could stay at the ashram, without any leave or contact with families, etc. until December. They were only to do so if they could do it easily – without causing any problems to themselves or others. Some of those who stayed were immediately dispatched to Rikhia to help with preparations there for Jhoolan and then the next Yajna. By then, those participants remaining in Ganga Darshan no longer had simple karma yoga duties. Each now had many responsibilities and was fully occupied.

When the news arrived that Swamiji would not be present in the ashram during Guru Poornima it was a surprise, but somehow, by now, also not a surprise. 'Adapt, adjust and accommodate' had become a tried and tested adage of the course. When Swamiji finally asked for a list of people who wanted initiation into poorna sannyasa, a dozen requested the initiation, others still felt the need to be stronger in themselves before taking such a step, but all felt that their association with Swamiji is for life.

At first we thought diksha may be given in Rikhia during the Jhoolan celebrations, but then we were informed it would happen on 12th September in Ganga Darshan. Well, the day of any birth is beyond the dictates of man's calendar because it is in divine hands; and the day of spiritual rebirth especially so."



But he didn't initiate all twelve people into sannyasa, did he?" my companion asked.

"No, only two." I replied. "It certainly seems he doesn't want people rushing into sannyasa life. After all that, he explained that everyone should practise the mantra they receive in mantra diksha for at least one year. Only after that can they request jignasu. Then they should wait for at least one year and only then should they consider taking the next step. So, they're still resident in the ashram for the most part, serving the guru, doing karma yoga, clearing their samskaras."

We pondered for a while, and then spotted Swami Atmananda walking our way. "She was Swami Satyananda's first sannyasin disciple," I explained. "She ran ashrams in Belfast and later Singapore. She also had charge of Swami Niranjan for many years while he was growing up. She was in charge of BSY during my first visit in 1977," I remarked. "I remember when Sri Swamiji left to tour Europe he left her in charge – she's a diminutive dynamite."

"Now she's staying in Ganga Darshan. Quite often we talk and she tells of her experiences with him. Swami Atmananda, how did you get to be Sri Swamiji's disciple?" I asked, "In those days, I thought women were not allowed to take sannyasa?"

You have to work for the world

"When I went to BSY I was doing all the work for Sri Swamiji, cleaning, sweeping, gardening and watering. There used to be a little pond and we had Ganges water through a direct connection from the Shiva temple. We would fill the pond and from there we would water the garden! In the evenings, Swamiji used to give Gita lectures and I used to record them, transcribe them during the morning and keep the manuscripts ready. We didn't have much money to buy tapes. We had only two or three tapes, of the old fashioned reel to reel kind, and I used to manage all the lectures with those. A big spool used to play for three or four hours, so every day we would use half a spool and I would have to start transcribing immediately, then wipe it out for the next satsang. I used to go to the post office and the bank, buy vegetables and groceries. Then in the afternoon at three o'clock

I would sit under the mango tree and wait for the postman to come with the letters.

Sri Swamiji was always busy with classes from four in the morning right up to evening. He was giving class all the time: asana, pranayama, mudra, bandha in the early morning, and thereafter meditation. In the afternoon, after a short break for lunch and a little rest, he would give yoga nidra, lectures on the Bhagavad Gita, or teach nada yoga and trataka. Although it was a little ashram, the work was quite hard. When a course was on we used to cook food for the students but when there was no course we didn't have any money to eat. Our fees were very low, Rs. 21 for residents and Rs. 5 for locals. Of course, in those days Rs. 5 was equal to Rs. 500 today. We were also saving money for developing the ashram. At the end of a course someone like the Goenkas would send dinner and we would have a convocation. All the people of Munger would come for satsang and Ramayana chanting from morning to evening, and that was the only time we would have really nice food. When a course was not on, we would have sattv, poha or dahi chura, that's all we used to eat.

In the beginning of 1965, I wrote to my father that I was not coming back. He didn't answer for six months, then sent a very nice letter with his blessings. He said that he had received an order from the Guru Granth Sahib that I could stay at the ashram. His letter was detailed with points A to Z. I would say that no other father could give such beautiful blessings as he gave me, full of good sense. He said, 'You are mature enough to decide. If you stay on, then don't come back as one fallen from sannyasa – then my door would be closed forever. If you come as a respectable and successful sannyasi, then my doors and my arms are always open, I will receive you and remain very inspired by Swamiji. You know I am very attached to him although I did not think it would happen in this way.' So I was very happy to have received his permission.

I had long hair to which I was very attached. I would never allow my hair to be touched. Because Swamiji knew this he gave me one of the finest shocks. Early in the morning he called in the barber and shaved my head. That was the most difficult

thing for me to accept. The next day was Guru Poornima and at midnight he gave me a very traditional sannyasa initiation. He was very happy and he told the Goenkas and even wrote to Satyabrat, Swami Niranjan's father about it. He was extremely happy; I was not. So okay, I got sannyasa. I never asked for it. I never liked the idea of sannyasa at all.

Swami Niranjan came to live in the ashram in 1966. Before that he used to only visit during conventions. In 1964, during the convention in November, he was only four years old. First thing in the morning, he would get up and start crying for milk. Swamiji



said, 'Take him back!' We didn't have milk; we couldn't afford to even look at milk. So Swami Niranjan joined the ashram in 1966 and Swamiji used to tell me, 'You look after him because he's your responsibility. I want him to be brought up by you, so take care.' Now I realize that it must have been my samskaras that he wanted to free me from.

I looked after Niranjan. I used to give him his bath. He used to eat from the same plate as me. I had to change his clothes and wash them and at night he used to sleep on my chowki. He was very thin and I was also very thin, and he used to kick

and move around the whole night. Every morning I would have a pain in my stomach. I used to tell Swamiji, 'I don't want to sleep with him because I'm getting hit in the stomach.' Then Swamiji brought a very big bed for me. He said, 'Okay, that's enough space, now you will have no problem.' The mosquito net was also big – everything was big, but that didn't bother Niranjan. Whether it was big or small made no difference to him, he would just crawl in and – bam!

Sri Swamiji used to do all the work himself. One day he was doing whitewashing, scraping the walls, etc. and some ladies came. At that time we had an old man in the ashram who had taken sannyasa. He was sitting in his little box and Swamiji was cleaning and scraping the walls in the bathroom. These Marwari ladies came up to him saying, 'We want to see Swamiji.' Swamiji was covered in white powder. They wanted to see Swamiji Maharaj so he sent them over to the old swami who used to feel very happy if anybody came and touched his feet. Swamiji knew this, so he sent them all over to that old swami. They touched his feet and said Swamiji this and Swamiji that. He said, 'But I'm not Swamiji, I'm just his disciple, the one you were talking with just now, he is Swamiji!' My God, they were so shocked! Nobody had expected him to be like that.

When Swami Niranjan first came to the ashram, Swamiji never asked him to study or read or sing, but when he was asleep, Swamiji used to play the tape recorder to him for yoga nidra. He recorded the Gita and Upanishads and other things which went into his subconscious mind. Sometimes it is really surprising the way he speaks. He has never studied; he never had the time to study. When he was here, he was just a playful child. When he went to South America he was also like a child, he was not serious. He didn't want to stay at home; he wanted to be a swami, that's all he wanted, sannyasa. Sannyasa, how it came so deep in his mind I can't say, I don't know about that, but I saw the way he used to play – just play. How he developed such knowledge still puzzles me. I've asked him but he doesn't answer. So I feel that he is not an ordinary person, but he's been born to serve Swamiji."

From Yoga Practice to Yogic Culture

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Looking at the development and growth of yoga through the centuries one comes to understand that yoga plays four roles in the life of an individual. The first role is yoga practice, the second is yoga sadhana, the third is yogic lifestyle and the fourth is imbibing the yogic culture. If we look at yoga from this perspective we will understand the relevance of yoga in our life today as well as the final outcome in the experience of evolution which can be had in life. This understanding of yoga has been the teaching and vision of Swami Sivananda as well as Swami Satyananda, the two masters and luminaries of our tradition.

Our practice of yoga in a classroom is progressive learning. We learn the basics, move to the intermediate group and then to the advanced group. We learn many different techniques, systems and methods. However, yoga sadhana does not become spiritual until we are able to isolate ourselves from the influences of sense objects. In order to understand the yogic process of inner transformation and development of life, we have to see yoga in different stages. There may be the desire or expectation to learn something new and different. Accept this, but also try to understand the yogic process, which can be viewed in the four parts enumerated above: yoga practice, yoga sadhana, yogic lifestyle and yogic culture.

At first we may practise yoga according to our needs, desires, expectation or curiosity. We may practise yoga as an experiment to manage these factors. Such involvement is yoga practice, not yoga sadhana; it does not go beyond the level of personal needs. There are thousands of yoga students in the world who come to a yoga class to manage their physical, psychological and emotional needs, to stretch and relax, to manage their stress. They come to yoga with an expectation that it will help heal the body or mind. For them yoga is not a subject of life; they

merely want to help themselves, feel better physically, remove distress and imbalance from life, and acquire optimum health. When they begin to practise yoga, they acquire the capacity to manage these imbalances. This provides them with a sense of achievement and now their yoga practice stops. It was applied to improve a certain condition and with that improvement the role of yoga in their life is over. However, after a few months or years down the line, when a problem or imbalance again comes up, they again start practising. They move from one class to another, from one centre to another. But after twenty years they find



that they have gained nothing because they have been digging one-foot deep holes in twenty places, hoping to find water. They fail to realize that to find water one needs to dig deep in one place. That temporary or fleeting association with yoga is yoga practice. We create an aim for ourselves according to our gross needs, and try to use yoga to attain those aims. Ninety percent of yoga practitioners fall in this category. They practise yoga because they feel their body needs it, it makes them feel light and energetic, or they want to deal with their stress and anxiety. The purpose is mundane and gross.

The second stage of the yogic process is yoga sadhana. Sadhana means participation or involvement in the practice, leading to perfection. Yoga sadhana is experienced when we follow the aims prescribed by yoga to bring about personal change. If we follow our own aspirations, it is not sadhana.

There are three definite aims in yoga. First, the achievement of a disciplined nature, as stated in the first sutra of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras: Atha yogah anushasanam* – "Yoga is a discipline." Yogic discipline means regulation of the normal behaviour, thought patterns and performance, not imposed restrictions. It is an awareness of the subtle processes influencing the outer behaviour. The word *anushasana* is generally translated as discipline, but from the yogic perspective it means to govern, know and realize the subtle mental behaviours that influence our external life. In this process, the first requirement is awareness, the second is analysis and understanding, the third is modification of the personality, the fourth is adjustment with the external environment, and the fifth is creation of harmony between oneself and the outer environment. The achievement of these five states represents knowing the subtle processes of one's mental behaviour, or discipline. When we use yoga to come to this point of balance, that is yoga sadhana.

The second aim prescribed by yoga is managing the mental vrittis. The second statement in the *Yoga Sutras* is: *Chitta vritti nirodha* – "Cessation of the inner agitation." This is the aim of yoga after attaining personal discipline. *Vrittis* are the expressions and experiences of the mind which hold our attention fixed in those particular experiences or events. *Vrittis* manifest all the time in our life, but unfortunately we don't recognize them as such. We see them as conflicts with the external world. If a discussion is seen as a verbal duel, it will create a *vritti* in which there is aggression, arrogance, rigidity and the desire to prove oneself right. *Vrittis* are like waves in the ocean which crash on the shore. Managing these mental behaviours becomes the second aim of yoga.

The third aim of yoga is in Patanjali's third sutra: *Tada drashtah swaroupe avasthanam* – "One realizes one's true nature by becoming the witness, the *drashta* (of one's interactions)." When we become the witness and do not hide behind a false identity, we become the master of our life. The consciousness is elevated to a higher level and life is seen from a different perspective. The higher we elevate our consciousness, the better perspective we will have. This happens when we become the *drashta*. We are not able to be a *drashta* because we are involved with ourselves, with the obsessive nature, and the faculty of observation has receded into the background. When we bring it to the forefront, we cultivate the ability to witness.

These are the three aims set forth for every yoga practitioner. Those who follow the principles and practices of yoga to attain one or all the three aims are recognized as yoga sadhakas and their practice is recognized as yoga sadhana.

In addition, each limb of yoga has a particular aim. The aim of hatha yoga is balance and harmony between the twin forces of prana and chitta, the vital energy and the mental energy, between the solar energy – vitality, dynamism, motion, activity – and the passive lunar energy – the thinking, rationalizing faculty. The aim of bhakti yoga is emotion management. The aim of kundalini yoga is to access the otherwise inaccessible psychic personality. The aim of karma yoga is to develop objectivity and remain free from the attachments or the outcome of action and reaction, to develop immunity to the karmas. In this way, each yoga has defined a direction for itself, an aim, and the attainment of that aim comes about when you adhere to the yogic practices with the purpose of acquiring it. That becomes the sadhana of that particular yoga.

The moment you begin to follow the path outlined by the yogas without your personal expectations interfering with the process, it is called yoga sadhana. When personal expectations take priority and yogic aspirations take the backseat, that is yoga practice. Sadhana means attaining perfection through

consistent, constant effort. Therefore, using yoga to fulfil our own aspirations is yoga practice, while using yoga to achieve the goals set by yoga and being devoted and dedicated to them is yoga sadhana. Such sadhana involves very intense work with and constant observation of oneself, and only five percent of yoga aspirants practise it. So let us first ask the question: are we yoga practitioners or yoga sadhakas?

The third stage of the yogic process is yogic lifestyle, and only about three percent of aspirants come in this category. This is where we live yogic principles as part of our normal lifestyle and apply the techniques of yoga to



manage our day-to-day situations. We begin to express the attainments of yoga in life and create an environment conducive to the health, well-being and peace of the entire family. All family members come together at least once a week to follow a spiritual practice jointly. The yogic yamas and niyamas are incorporated in life's expressions. A positive attitude and positive qualities are cultivated. It is a life of balance in which yoga capsules are used to progress ahead. Now yoga is not just a practice done for a specific duration in the morning or evening, but becomes a natural expression of life.

For example, a person living the yogic lifestyle will deal with stress in a different way. They may practise deep abdominal breathing in the car, bhrumari pranayama in the middle of a workday or yoga nidra on returning home in the evening. They will use yoga at different times of the day to manage the states of body and mind and thus avoid many physiological and psychological problems. Yoga becomes part of the natural behaviour of their life; it is used in everyday routines and activities. As one becomes more fluent in such use of yoga, the mind, behaviour and attitude begin to reflect the yogic awareness and one begins to express the human qualities inherent within. One's actions are guided by inner wisdom and not by the rules or conditions set by society. This reflection of yogic awareness is known as yogic culture.

'Yoga is the culture of tomorrow' was the pronouncement of Swami Satyananda. He knew that the day would eventually come when yoga would become the need of everyone, and that has happened. Yoga was not widely known in the decades of the forties and fifties, but today it is seen as the panacea and a solution for many of life's problems and conflicts. From an obscure philosophy of life it has become the need of today, and if it has become the need of today, it will definitely become the culture of tomorrow.

The term 'culture' means to extract the essence. That is what is happening; we are extracting the essence of yoga from the traditions, from the scriptures, rejuvenating something that was lost. In Sanskrit, culture is defined as *Samyak kritena iti samskriti*. *Samyak kritena* means harmonious expression of human creativity at all levels. Such harmony in individual, social and global life represents a yogic culture. Gradually, we are coming to this point of harmony where we can coexist peacefully with both the creative and the destructive. The day we learn to live in such a way, yoga will be recognized as the human culture. Until then our search and journey continues. ॐ



January

Yoga Doot programs for YYMM members were held at Ganga Darshan from 10th to 17th January, 20th to 24th January, 19th to 23rd February, 26th to 30th March, 21st to 25th April and 20th to 24th May.

From the 13th to 18th, Notre Dame sisters from Germany, USA and India attended a course at Ganga Darshan conducted by Dr Rishi Vivekananda, Dr Swami Nirmalananda, Swamis Satyadharma, Yogakanti and Sumitrananda. Swami Niranjana gave satsang.

Swami Niranjana spoke at a yoga camp held at Kali Bhavan, Giridih, from the 15th to 31st, organized by the Red Cross Society, and conducted by Swami Tyagraj and Sannyasi Shraddhamati. Classes were held at Giridih Jail, and BYMM members taught at local schools.

BYMM conducted camps for 1,200 children from the 15th to 29th, at BMS DAV and CCL DAV Public Schools and Mount Carmel Convent.

From the 21st to 30th, BYMM conducted courses at 5 centres in Munger district, coordinated by Vedvrat, Sheshanath, Rakesh and Tejaswita, and

12 centres in Bariapur district, coordinated by Madhava, Sumit, Rajiv and Smriti. Sandhya Mishra coordinated yoga examinations for the 5,000 students.

YYMM and BYYMM conducted an Introductory Youth Yoga Course from the 21st to 27th at Bhagalpur University, for 5,700 students from 23 colleges and 25 postgraduate departments. The Vice Chancellor of TM Bhagalpur University, Sri Ramashraya Prasad Yadav, was the chief guest at the closing ceremony at Ganga Darshan.

Swami Satyananda Yoga Ashramam, Vijayawada, conducted classes in Vijayawada, Pamarru and Chennai.

On the 23rd, Rishis Vasishtha and Arundhati spoke to a gathering in Mumbai.

From 30th January to 3rd February, a program was held at

Ganga Darshan for 17 students from the Institute for Special Education, Dept of Education, University of Bremen, Germany, led by Swami Chandrajyoti. Swami Niranjana gave satsang, and Dr Rishi Vivekananda, Dr Swamis Nirmalananda, Mangalteertham and Mudraroop, Swamis Yogakanti and Sumitrananda, and Sannyasi Soumyashakti gave classes and talks.

February

Basant Panchami marked the 39th Foundation Day of BSY.

Swami Atmabhishek, Noida, conducted programs at Prakritik Chikitsa Grihasah Yoga Kendra, Kanhauli, from the 8th to 15th, at SSKM Medical College on the 15th and 23rd, at Ram Dayalu Smriti Bhavan, Tilak Maidan, organized by Rotary Yoga Mitra Mandal, from the 16th to 23rd, and at ACC Ltd's Gagal Cement Works from 2nd to 9th March.



Balconagar Yoga Mitra Mandal, Korba, organized a camp from the 9th to 16th, conducted by Swami Satyabindu and Sannyasi Agniprakash.

Children's Yoga Day, Bal Yoga Diwas, was celebrated on the 14th at Ganga Darshan with havan, bhajans, kirtans, dance and karate displays by BYMM members. Swami Niranjan gave satsang and distributed prasad.

Courses were held from the 17th to 23rd February and 20th to 28th May at Ganga Darshan for Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd, Sambalpur.

From the 20th to 23rd, Damoha YMM conducted classes at Ram Kumar Higher Secondary School and at Damoha Jail.

Swami Niranjan was in Bhilwara, Rajasthan, to lay the foundation stone of the new ashram, Dev Darshan, to be known

as the Satyananda Institute of Vedic and Yogic Sciences. He was accompanied by Dr Rishi Vivekananda, Swami Shankarananda, Jignasu Dharmarakshit, Vikas Kumar and Manish Poddar. Swamiji also gave satsang on the 20th and 21st at the Town Hall and the Osho Meditation Centre.

On the 22nd, Swamiji gave satsang in Ajmer, and Dr Rishi Vivekananda and Dr. Swami Shankarananda spoke to university students.

March

A yoga program was held at Ganga Darshan from the 3rd to 15th for Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Mumbai.

On the 10th, Dr Swami Mangalteertham, Dept of Applied Yogic Sciences, BYB, spoke at Damoha Court House.

A yoga camp, organized by Sri Oswal Jain Swetambar Samaj, Jagadapur, and Kondagaon YMM, was conducted by Swami Gorakhnath on the 14th.

Satyananda Yoga Centre, Mumbai, held a course combining yoga and trekking from the 14th to 17th.

Swami Niranjan visited Barauni Refinery Township, Begusarai, from the 22nd to 23rd for the inauguration of the Yoga Dhyana Kendra.

April

On the 10th and 11th, Sannyasi Yogasindhu spoke at Patna University, Patna.

Swami Satyananda Yoga Ashramam, Vijayawada, conducted programs for Irrigation Department officers from the 13th to 19th, for children from the 22nd to 31st May, and HMCs in April, June, August, September and October.

Swami Atmabhishek conducted programs at Zila School hall from the 12th to 20th, organized by Motihari YMM. Swami Gorakhnath inaugurated the Yoga Adhyatma Library.

Swami Tyagraj conducted a program organized by Giridih YMM from the 15th to 25th. Classes were also held at Subhash Public School.

YYMM volunteers conducted a Gram Yoga Yatra, Yoga for Villagers Tour, in Tarapur, Asarganj, Navgain, Majhgain and Sangrampur villages from the 15th to 21st, and classes for school students. BYMM and BYYMM gave classes organized by Satyananda Yoga Kendra, Indore, from 28th April to 7th June. Demonstrator 1 and 2 courses were also conducted.

May

Dr Swami Shankardevananda conducted programs in North America from May to July.

From the 1st, Swami Niranjan conducted programs in Bariarpur, Surajgarh, Jawayat and Sangrampur. He was accompanied by Swamis Tyagraj, Maheshananda and Suryaprakash, Sannyasi Yantrashanti and Vikas Kumar.

In Bhopal, Maharishi Patanjali Yoga Kendra conducted children's camps from the 3rd to 12th May and 26th May to 5th June.

Swami Atmabhishek conducted a camp at the Tata Chemicals Ltd. campus, Babrala, UP, from the 5th to 12th.





Satyananda Yoga Centre, Pune, conducted a program organized by the Maharashtra State Education Board from the 5th to 28th. His Excellency Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, President of the Republic of India, visited Ganga Darshan Gurukul on the 31st as part of a state visit to Bihar. He was welcomed by Swami Niranjan, Swami Satsangi, ashram residents, BYMM, BYMM and YMM members and BYB students.

June

Swami Satyadharma gave programs in South Korea and Hong Kong.

Swami Satyananda Yoga Ashramam, Vijayawada, conducted programs in Karavadi, in Ongole District villages from the 15th to 17th June.

July

Guru Poornima was celebrated at Rikhiapeeth from the 11th to 13th, and in Munger on the 13th.

August

On the 19th, Janmashtami was celebrated at Rikhiapeeth with chanting of the entire Bhagavad Gita.

Swami Atmabhishek conducted a seminar at National Fertilizers Ltd, Naya-Nangal, Punjab, from the 3rd to 10th, classes at schools, and a workshop at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, from the 24th to 31st.

September

Swami Atmabhishek conducted yoga seminars sponsored by SPIC-MACAY at Netaji Subhas Institute of Technology, Delhi, from the 2nd to 9th.

The annual programs were celebrated at Rikhiapeeth with the narration of kathas from the Srimad Bhagavatam by Kumari Bhakti Kiran and Dr Akhilananda Shastri from Varanasi.

On the 12th, the second convocation of BYB was held at Ganga Darshan with an address by the Chancellor, Swami Niranjan. Students graduating from the 2001–2003 MA/MSc courses received degrees from the Vice Chancellor, Swami Shankarananda.

Sannyasis Atmatattwa and Achyutananda conducted a program from the 11th to 15th, organized by the Hungarian Yoga Association.

In Bilaspur, a yoga program was held at Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Malhara, from the 15th to 20th.

October

Students from Shantiniketan, WB, attended a program at Ganga Darshan from the 5th to 11th, conducted by Swami Gyanbhikshu, Dr Swami Nirmalananda and Sannyasis Shraddhamati and Taponidhi.

Swami Satyananda Yoga Ashramam, Vijayawada, conducted programs in Ongole district on the 7th October and 5th November, and in Chennai from the 20th to 29th October.

A course was conducted at Rikhiapeeth from the 9th to 28th for students led by Swami Muktidharma from Anahata Retreat Centre, New Zealand. The program included satsang with Sri Swamiji.

On the 11th and 12th, Swami Niranjan gave satsang at Akshika Peeth, Chandisthan, Munger.

Swami Hrishikeshananda from Satyam Om Yoga Vidyalaya, Bilaspur, conducted classes at NTPC, Korba, from the 27th to 31st.

In Delhi, Swami Atmabhishek conducted seminars sponsored by SPIC-MACAY at Kumayun Hostel from the 27th to 31st, and at Vasant Valley School from the 28th to 31st.

A Yogic Studies Certificate Course commenced with 57 students from 21 countries.

November

Programs were conducted by Swami Atmabhishek at Guru Govind Singh Indraprastha University, Delhi, from the 3rd to 7th and at Birla Institute of Management Technology from the 10th to 14th.

BYB interns and YMM members conducted a refresher course from the 6th to 13th in Bihar's 6 Central Jails.

Swami Omkarananda, Ananda Darshan Ashram, Bhagalpur, conducted a program from the 10th to 16th at Dhyana Yoga Kendra, Barauni Refinery, Begusarai.



Rajasooya Yajna was held at Sri Panch Dashnam Paramahansa Alakh Bara, Rikhia, from the 24th to 28th and Sat Chandi Maha Yajna was performed to invoke the blessings of Devi, the Cosmic Mother. Thousands of devotees from all over India and more than 25 countries participated. Sri Swamiji announced that the kanyas would conduct the program, and that he would attend only on the final day when Devi had left, so that participants could concentrate on the Divine Mother. Prasad of grains and Sri Swamiji's auspicious blessings reached everyone participating in the yajna for their peace, prosperity and well-being, the birthright of all humanity.

December

A sadhana course was taught by Swamis Vigyanachaitanya, Prembhava, Suryaprakash, Satyadharma, Sumitrananda and Yogakanti at Ganga Darshan from the 1st to 6th.



Swamis Kaivalyananda and Gyanbhikshu inaugurated a program of Bhagavad Katha at DJ College, Munger, on the 1st. Swami Niranjana was the chief guest on the 9th.

A seminar on 'Improving the Quality of Life' was held at Ganga Darshan from the 2nd to 4th with Swami Niranjana, Dr. Rishi Vivekananda, Dr. Swami Shankardevananda, Swami Sivamurti, Rishis Arundhati and Vasishtha and Dr. Swami Mangalteertham, Sannyasi Yogasindhu and Prof Hari Shankar Singh.

A Kriya Yoga and Tattwa Shuddhi course was conducted by Swami Anandananda at Rikhiapeth from the 16th to 22nd for 22 Satyananda Yoga teachers and students from Italy.



I was fascinated by the recollections Swami Atmanananda had shared some time ago, and realized her commitment to Swami Satyananda had led to a wealth of experience. One day it was raining heavily and I asked more on the fascinating subject of Swami Niranjana's birth and the mission. Sometimes she would sit silently, picturing things in her mind, sometimes she would speak, reliving the past with great earnestness and conviction.

I have seen it rain

"Sri Swamiji, Satyabrat, Dharmashakti and Satyabrat's sister went to Gangotri in 1960. At that time, as far as I know, Dharmashakti's age was around 40 and Satyabrat was also 45 or so. They had no child and the doctor had told her she would never conceive. In Gangotri, Satyabrat said to Sri Swamiji, 'We want a child.' Then Swamiji made a sankalpa. At Gangotri, where the Ganga originates, he did aahvaan, invocation, for some great soul, some saint. She found herself pregnant from the next day. When they went back the doctor was surprised, 'How was it possible that you conceived?' So this is how Swami Niranjana was conceived – I'm sure Ammaji must have told you all this."

"No, she told me many stories of his childhood and I've seen all the photographs, but she never told me of this directly." I replied. "He really wanted to be with Sri Swamiji though, didn't he?"



"Oh yes. As a child, everyday he would take his little school bag and go to the railway station saying, 'I'm going to Munger.' So Satyabrat would say, 'Okay, you will go to Munger, but today there's no train.' Everyday they had to find some excuse to keep the boy at home. He was determined. He stopped eating his food and gave them a lot of trouble. They said to Sri Swamiji, 'He cannot stay at home, please take him.' So he came to be in the ashram."

Since he had been brought through aahvaan – with a purpose – Sri Swamiji had told them, 'When the child is born; don't think that he will be your son. This great soul which I've called is going to be mine.' So naturally when the child was born he didn't want to stay with the parents. For him there was only Swamiji; he was always very devoted to Swamiji from an early age. He used to threaten us when we got angry because he knew that Sri Swamiji would listen to him and take his side.

In 1968 Sri Swamiji went on his first international tour. He went from Munger to Mumbai, then flew to Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, visited Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, Washington, then went to Europe visiting Belgium, France, Germany and England. He wrote to me from the US, 'I'm going to arrive with 68 students. Make the place ready for them.' At

that time we had only four rooms. How was I going to manage? And they were coming for a three-month sadhana course in only three or four month's time! With the help of K.K. Goenka, who was the secretary of BSY, we managed to acquire the land adjacent to the ashram and started building.

I had a vision of Sri Swamiji one night. I got up from my bed and went into the office and saw him sitting there. He took a pen, paper and a map and calculated all the expenses. He wrote down every detail and then disappeared. Then I went back to sleep. The next morning I remembered that Sri Swamiji was there so I went to look for him, but he wasn't there. I went to the office because I remembered that he had written something. It was still there! I couldn't understand it so I called KK and said, 'Swamiji has written this.' He said, 'Is Swamiji back?' I said, 'No.' He asked how and I said, 'I don't know, he came and wrote all this and then went away.' KK was also puzzled but we started construction of the building as advised.

With me were Swami Niranjan and Swami Satchidananda and everything worked smoothly. We had to build a well, a



three-storey building and a high compound wall for safety reasons. Time was very short but we got full cooperation from the electricity department, and working day and night, in three months we completed the building. This was quite a major work, to construct a three-storey building in three months, but Sri Swamiji had given his arrival date so everyone including the electricians and plumbers were working very fast.

Suddenly Sri Swamiji came! About 3.30 in the morning, he arrived with a truck full of people. I was bathing. When I saw him I said, 'But Swamiji we were not expecting you today!' He said, 'I've come to my own home! Can I not come to my home early?' I said, 'I've not checked everything. Everything is ready but the final touches have to be put still.' He said, 'Oh, don't worry, we will do it. We are so many, we will manage everything.'

Swami Niranjan was playing pranks all the time. One day I was sitting with Sri Swamiji in the office. He was facing the door and suddenly burst out laughing. I turned and saw Niranjan standing there with no eyebrows and no eyelashes. He said, 'I shaved them off – I wanted to see what it would look like.' That's why his eyelashes are so beautiful! He used to trouble the students so much but they all loved him. Their belongings, shoes, etc. used to disappear and they knew it was he – and there were two other children there with him.

Swami Niranjan was always very interested to learn. There was an expensive cyclostyling machine that we used to print circulars on – there was no printing press at that time. One day, while Swamiji was in class, Niranjan opened that machine up totally. By the time Swamiji's class finished he had only put half of it back together again. 'Atmananda – what is he doing!' Swamiji never got angry with him or beat him, so Swami Niranjan started laughing the way he does, 'Ah, Swamiji, I've opened it and already put back half of it.' God knows what he did, but Swamiji said, 'Finish it, let me see.' And he did very well; when we tried the machine it worked perfectly. Swamiji asked him, 'Why did you do that?' He replied, 'I wanted to see what it was like inside.' He had that curiosity to know everything that is inside.



One day he went and put his rudraksha mala in the akhanda jyoti, the eternal flame, that we had installed in BSY. Swamiji was furious with me, 'What is he doing!' I had not been watching him as I had been busy elsewhere. Swamiji said that whether I had other work to do or not, if there was any mistake in the ashram, it was mine. So I also got very angry that time. I caught hold of Niranjan and gave him one hit, 'Because of you Swamiji shouts at me and gets angry!' He started crying, 'You're hurting me, you're beating me.' Then I explained to him that the jyoti is something holy. He never did it again.

There are many little things that Sri Swamiji taught us. I was just a raw stone to whom he tried to give shape and form. I don't know whether he was successful or not, but he tried. Whether I disappointed him or not, that I can't say. He used to teach by living practically. He never gave lectures – he would teach by example.

In the summer he would tell all the swamis to sit in a straight line in the garden, then he would take a hosepipe and give everyone a bath with the pipe, and he'd take one himself as well. It was very enjoyable and helped us let go of our complexes and inhibitions. Sri Swamiji didn't just correct his disciples; to make

them learn something he would spend his whole energy. He was a strong guru, very strong, yet he could be so friendly and soft.

In 1971 when the International Sannyasa Training Course started, Hariprem, Vajrapani, Gorakhnath, Krishnaprem and others joined. During the course all we would get was dalia and khichari for lunch and dinner – and no breakfast. The children, Gorakhnath, Akhandananda and Swami Niranjan tried all kinds of tricks to break the monotony. They would steal into the storeroom where the jaggery, brown sugar, and other items were kept. From the kitchen verandah they had to climb up to the window and then jump down into the storeroom. Swami Gorakhnath used to stand like a horse and on top of him would be Akhandananda and on top of him, Swami Niranjan who was very thin and light and tall. Because he was on the top, he used to jump down from the window, get the sugar and whatever else he could manage quickly and pass it to Akhandananda who would pass it to Gorakhnath and then they would all jump down. Nobody knew about it, but once, someone caught them, went to Sri Swamiji and said, 'Swamiji, do you know what these boys are doing?' Sri Swamiji replied, 'Let them.'

So what did he do? He spread oil on the window ledge and stood quietly behind the storeroom door so they didn't know that anyone was there. As usual, Swami Niranjan jumped in, and then his feet slipped because of the oil and Swamiji opened the door and laughed, 'What – are you hungry? Haven't you eaten anything? What sort of thievery are you doing here?' After that he would give them a special snack every day. It was so beautiful to see them all at that time.

While I was in Belfast, Sri Swamiji brought Swami Niranjan there. That was the first time Swami Niranjan had travelled overseas, or by plane. In Belfast, Niranjan opened up the telephone, which is the property of the government. Those tiny thin fingers wanted to feel inside the plugholes, to know what was inside, he was so curious to know everything. That child really was always up to something!

Slowly the ashram grew and eventually I bought my first car for five pounds! At first I had no money, no place, nothing to even eat – but everything came by the blessings of Sri Swamiji, there's no

other way that it could have happened. I held classes for mentally retarded people, in prisons, army camps, etc. I used to travel far away from Belfast for the classes. Swami Niranjan would say, 'I want to take class.' I would reply, 'Niranjan, you are so small, who wants to learn from you? People will laugh and they won't learn, they will run away from the ashram.' He would say, 'What do you think – that I'm just a child?' I would say, 'But you are a child.' So he wrote complaining to Sri Swamiji, 'Chotti Swamiji thinks that I'm just a child and she doesn't allow me to take classes.' So Swamiji wrote back to him, 'Yes, when she feels that it is the right time she will let you take classes – don't worry.'

In 1972, when I visited Munger I also travelled to Rajnandgaon where I met Swami Niranjan's parents. We talked about him who now felt like my son. They said he should have a little experience at school, so for a little while I used to take him to school every day and bring him back. I had special permission for him to wear geru so everybody knew that he was a yogi. Outside our ashram they would print graffiti, 'Yogi Bear Lives Here'. We were living in



a Protestant area. The Catholic children would say to him, 'Don't go to a Protestant area' and the Protestant children would say, 'Don't go to a Catholic area.' By experiencing all this he developed a good knowledge of communal problems.

Then Satyabrat had the fatal accident. Sri Swamiji wrote in his letter, 'Give Niranjan the news slowly, make him understand and then give him this letter.' Swami Niranjan just said, 'Where's my letter, give it to me.' Swami Niranjan stayed with me. Then he went to England to stay with Arundhati and Vasishtha in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and then travelled to Colombia.

Swami Niranjan is so simple. He doesn't know how to get angry. He can only get angry when it is absolutely necessary. And what kind of anger? He doesn't take a clock and hit you on the head. If you make a mistake he will tell you it's a mistake. If you don't correct yourself he will tell you again, but he doesn't get angry and beat you up saying, 'Why haven't you done it correctly?'

When Sri Swamiji left Ganga Darshan I didn't know about it. That year there was an earthquake in August. I immediately phoned Munger, 'How is Swamiji?' 'They said, he's fine, he's all right, wherever he is.' It was only then I heard that he had left the ashram. I wanted to see him but where to catch him? I returned to India to find Sri Swamiji had already said that I would follow him. I met Sri Swamiji, and he spoke about what he'd been doing and about how free he felt with Swami Niranjan looking after the ashram. I asked, 'Swamiji, can I also join you?' He said, 'Yes, you can join.' Just like that; it didn't take a minute.

Back in Singapore, I realized I was very tired. I also wanted to become free. We had an International Convention planned in Singapore. I had invited Swami Niranjan to come and he'd agreed so I came to Munger in September to arrange the details. At this time we travelled to Deoghar to see Sri Swamiji. There was an old broken down house in which he was staying, they had just bought the land for the Rikhia ashram. I said to Sri Swamiji, 'I'm coming; this convention is my last responsibility, I will come immediately after that.'

Swami Niranjan looks after the ashram very well. Sri Swamiji always says that Niranjan doesn't have to do anything, he

doesn't have to study anything, he doesn't have to go anywhere; he gets all the knowledge by himself naturally. He never studied anything as far as I know – when does he have the time to study? I've always seen him busy, even now. He knows everything. For me he is a real miracle. He's very great. When he comes and when he leaves, I've seen it rain."

I was still recovering from the impact of Swami Atmananda's experiences when my young friend discovered this poem in a back issue of *Yoga* magazine. After learning about how Swami Niranjan was born and his life as a child, the poem seems even more powerful. As a child of 12, this is the commitment he felt.



Guru Poornima

A glorious day will dawn
when the heritage of my country
will be engulfed by clouds of fragrant incense
and thousands will bow down at your holy feet.
O Gurudev, bless them all
and guide me in the path of Truth
for I am one with you
even though I may be far away.

Fill this mortal frame
with the five nectars of discernment, non-attachment,
will-power, non-indulgence and self-restraint.
In that most noble yajna
grant me liberation.

These powerful nations,
symbols of prosperity,
have no sensibility at their heart.
Skyscrapers, computers, factories
belch forth their poisonous filth;
man himself has become a mere machine.

Now it is the tablet age.
Mothers have forgotten how to sing a lullaby
and fathers how to tell a fairy tale.
The children pop a pill and sleep – a kind of sleep.
Toddlers in uniforms babble about bombs.
Teenagers are misguided and confused; craving for
sense enjoyment has paralysed their souls.

Decrepit old men, history's witnesses,
have seen my country writhe
in the agony of subjugation.

Amidst these scientific nations
I shall set the fire of yajna ablaze
and offer as oblations in that fire
the masks of maturity on the faces of children,
their distorted samskaras
and the false eyes of their elders.

Mechanised man will awaken once more
to the summons of Aum.
Before medication and disease
drive them to the point of no return
I shall draw them back.
Yogic culture will open up
the way to a new life,
Vedanta will put an end to their pain
and my morning song of benediction
will usher in auspicious days.

I shall baptise them in the waters of love
and lead them to where darkness ends.
So let the horizons of undaunted wisdom spread wide
and the bridge of my open arms span infinity,
like the boundless sky
where the sun shines eternal.

Swami Niranjanananda



“Such profound understanding, such intense drive – in a child of twelve! No, you cannot fathom the light that glows in Swami Niranjana’s heart,” I gave up despite all the stories I had been listening to in the attempt to create this book.

“But he does bathe you in that light every now and then, doesn’t he,” observed my friend sagely.

“Yes, that’s true. This year at the Convocation Address when he spoke to the students, it was one such occasion. He told them that he was giving them a threefold mandate: (i) to strive for excellence in life and perfection in yoga, (ii) to strive to uplift themselves spiritually throughout their life, and (iii) to serve others. Hearing him, you couldn’t help but be inspired.”

“The work he has initiated in the prisons is particularly amazing,” pointed out another listener.

“And this year BYB conducted a refresher course in six of Bihar’s Central Jails,” I added. “The prisoners who had already undergone yoga training were given classes in asana,

pranayama, neti and laghoo shankhaprakshalana by BYB interns and members of Y2M2. The aim was to train a core group of prisoners whom the prison administration could employ in conducting yoga classes in the jails on a regular basis. A total of 290 prisoners took part in the program: 65 in Patna, 45 in Buxar, 45 in Gaya, 35 in Muzaffarpur, 50 in Bhagalpur and 50 in Bhagalpur Special Jail.”

“It seems he is always planting yogic samskaras wherever he goes, whatever he does,” remarked another traveller to Ganga Darshan.

“Oh certainly,” I replied. “Let’s ask Swami Ahimsadhara how these samskaras sprouted for her after years of dormancy.”

Coming home

“I met Swami Niranjana when he was 16 and I was 15. It was October 1976. I had taken the week off school to go to the International Yoga Convention in Sydney and he had just arrived from Colombia. I had never heard of him before I saw him. I had

been practising yoga for one year, attending classes in Manly and visiting the fledgling ashram at Mangrove Mountain whenever I could. I had already made an internal decision that I wanted to be a sannyasin, though I barely knew what it meant and I lacked the confidence to be open about it. I remember seeing Swamiji striding along at the convention, tall, lanky, cheeky, carefree and as happy as can be. The sight of him at that moment is fixed in my memory as clearly as if it had been yesterday, and the feeling of wonderment and curiosity that I felt remains just as strong as the image. ‘Who is that person?’ I asked myself, for he had sparked some dormant knowing in the depths of my being. On that occasion I took mantra diksha from Swami Satyananda. We all stood in a very long queue in the garden of a house somewhere, waiting our turn. My turn came and I went into the room where Sri Swamiji sat with Swami Niranjana at his side. The mantra and symbol were written on a scrap of paper which I have to this day.

After the convention, Swamiji stayed on in Australia. We just called him Niranjana in those days. I took every opportunity to

go to the Mangrove Mountain ashram, or 'the land' as it was known. On my visits he would be there, teaching and working and larking around. One day he asked me when my birthday is. '11th of January,' I said, and his great eyes became even wider as he exclaimed in surprise, 'That is my sannyasa birthday!'

At times I would go to the Manly ashram and he would be there. It was always a surprise to see him. At that time the ashram was in a small flat very close to my home, so sometimes I would walk down to visit. I recall a time when I was in the hallway of the ashram, when Swamiji came swinging down the stairs. As with each time we met, the impression of him is strong and clear. I remember looking up at him and catching his smile. He gave me a piece of paper with something he had drawn. It still lives in my box of special mementoes, along with the mantra from Sri Swamiji.

When I was 16 I took another week off school. This time it was to go to Mangrove for a sadhana week. During the sadhana week Swamiji taught the morning classes. I was the youngest participant. We were up at 4 am and sitting in the sadhana hall at 4.30 for class. One morning we all sat waiting and the teacher didn't come. We waited and waited and no one came. Everyone was sleepy and just sat there. I looked around and thought, 'Why doesn't someone do something?' But they just sat there.



So taking matters into my own hands, I walked out of the room to find him. There was just one building in the ashram at that stage. It housed the sadhana hall, male and female dormitories and an office. I walked along the verandah to the office at the other end. I had no idea where Swamiji slept or any of the other sannyasins. In the darkness I pushed open the office door. On the floor was a bundle of geru and inside that geru was Swami Niranjan, fast asleep. I remember that there was no bed, no mattress, no covers, nothing except Swamiji curled up in dhotis. I paused, wondering what to do now. He woke, gazing up at me. 'Everyone is waiting,' I said. He jumped up and I went back to the hall. A few moments later in he marched, as though nothing had happened and proceeded to teach.

Those times are like looking back into a magic world of stories and innocence. A cluster of memories come into my mind, and he is in them all. It's as if nothing much else was retained except impressions of him. Once at Mangrove I was standing by the creek. A truck pulled out of the gate and drove off in a cloud of dust. He was sitting in the tray, bumping along, grinning from ear to ear, eating a banana and chucking the peel away. The camera in my mind went click and the whole scene lives on.

I found a job in a café on the other side of Sydney. One day I was at work and in walked Swamiji with Shankardev. I couldn't believe my eyes. He was going to New Zealand. When he left Australia everything began to change. That year, 1977, Sri Swamiji came to Australia for Guru Poornima and Swamiji was there. I went to Mangrove and only remember one thing. I was called in to see Sri Swamiji. Swamiji was at his side. I felt confused about what I wanted and again, overawed in their presence and unable to think clearly. I asked for a name and was given another scrap of paper with the name Ahimsa on it. I asked its meaning and Sri Swamiji said in his expressive way, 'It doesn't mean non-violence. It means love, love, love!' As he spoke he spread his arms wide, to show what love is. But I never used the name until 2001 when I took karma sannyasa at the Rocklyn Ashram and Swamiji called me Ahimsadhara.



From that day in 1977 I didn't see Swamiji again until 1996, when I once again made the journey across Sydney to the opening of the International Yoga Convention, 20 years on. Many things had happened in my life, but the flame he had ignited in my heart never faded. On the stage that night I saw who he had become. The lanky teenager was long gone and in his place was a man of immense peace and dignity. I went to him at the end of the evening, when everyone was leaving. His face lit up, he took my hands and gave me a flower.

At the end of 2001 I finally travelled to India with my children to visit Rikhia and Ganga Darshan. When I entered the Ganga Darshan gates for the first time, I felt I had arrived at the most beautiful place in the world. I saw Swamiji and he said to me, 'Welcome, since 1976.' I took poorna sannyasa. At last I had come home."

The President of India came to Ganga Darshan on May 31st. It must have been arranged in advance but most of us didn't know about it until just before his arrival. For weeks we had been getting the buildings painted, watering the gardens, cleaning the clean halls, we knew something was going on, but then at 8.45 am the presidential helicopter circled Ganga Darshan before landing at the nearby Polo Ground. The President arrived at



Ganga Darshan and stayed until 10 am, spending a memorable time with the ashram residents and yoga children of Munger.

Upon his arrival at Ganga Darshan, the President was welcomed by Swami Niranjan, Swami Satsangi, Swami Shankarananda, the acharyas of the Satyananda Ashrams and distinguished guests from Munger. The President then visited Jyoti Mandir where, amid the sound of the conch and the drum, he offered floral tributes to Swami Sivananda's statue and mentioned how his meeting with Swami Sivananda in 1958 had changed his perception and vision of life. He entered the polished spacious hall of Main Building with his entourage and we witnessed the proceedings.

The President then visited Sri Niwas, on the 6th floor, and was shown the panoramic view of the entire ashram, the river Ganga and the surrounding town of Munger. A slide presentation explained Ganga Darshan Gurukul, its numerous institutions and their activities. He showed a keen interest in the yoga research projects and the charitable activities of SM. The President then visited the comprehensive research library and finally the sadhana hall on the second floor, where a gathering of around 800 ashram residents, members of BYMM, BYMM and Y2M2, BYB students, well-wishers of the ashram and distinguished visitors from various parts of India were waiting to welcome him. It was very formal but then the President first greeted the children, asking them questions on a variety of topics. He shook hands with children from the karate group who had gained black belts, and the other children all wanted to shake hands with him too.

Swami Satsangi made the formal welcoming speech:

"The seed of this visit, Your Excellency, was sown 45 years ago at Rishikesh when you met Swami Sivananda on the banks of the Ganges, a meeting which you have described vividly in your autobiography *Wings of Fire*. So naturally we are happy that you have come here as this is his place, created as a living tribute to him by his most dynamic and





spiritually accomplished disciple Swami Satyananda, who, having renounced all of this, now lives at Rikhia in the state of Jharkhand.

Your Excellency, in the Treta Yuga, Rishi Vishwamitra gave the Brahmastra to Lord Rama. Now, thousands of years later, in Kali Yuga, you have given the same gift to the people of this land. We therefore welcome you as the President of a great nation, as well as a rishi of the 21st century. We are confident that your visit will generate new ideas in the field of both science and spirituality. On behalf of all present, I thank Your Excellency for coming here today. I now request His Excellency to interact with the residents of Ganga Darshan and the children of Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal of Munger."

His Excellency Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, President of the Republic of India, smiled disarmingly.

Wings of Fire

"Namaskara, good morning to all of you, to Swami Dharmashakti, Swami Niranjanananda, Swami Satyasangananda and, of course, venerable Swami Sivananda, whom I always cherish in my memory.

Friends, what can I tell you? You are in Bihar Yoga Bharati, which creates a beautiful body and mind. I admire the great founders of this organization, and so I would like to thank the Almighty for giving the people of India such a beautiful place in which they can dream, think and transform themselves into enlightened citizens.

I want to tell you about an important incident that happened in my life in 1958. Some of you will have read about it in Wings of Fire. But for the young people here who have not come across the book, I thought I would repeat it. When I was a young boy, I dreamt that I would fly. I had a fantastic



teacher, Sivasubramania Iyer, who gave me the idea that I must take to science and do something connected with flight. So I went into aeronautical engineering and graduated in 1957, a long time ago.

I wanted to become a pilot. That was my dream. I applied to the Air Force and was asked to attend an interview with the Air Force Selection Board in Dehradun. So I travelled all the way from my home in the island town of Rameshwaram, in the south of India, across the sea, from Mandabam to Chennai, from Chennai to Delhi, from Delhi to Dehradun. It was the

first time I had seen the whole of India, this beautiful land of different cultures.

For selection, in four days you had to do all sorts of things: run, do gymnastics, attend interviews and group discussions. Out of 25 applicants, eight were to be selected. After four days of difficult tasks, nine were selected. I was the ninth, but they wanted only eight. I was told I had a good chance because normally one fellow would not pass the medical exam. However, for some reason, by God's grace, all the eight got through the medical, and so I was not selected.

I was very dejected. I decided to take a bus to Delhi via Rishikesh and Haridwar. I started from Dehradun in the early morning. When I arrived in Rishikesh, suddenly the beautiful vista of the Ganges appeared in front of me, that crystal clear water coming from the Himalayas. I felt like taking a bath, even though it was November. After bathing in the Ganges, I was putting on my dhoti, when I looked over at the opposite riverbank. There I saw the most beautiful, happy building. Automatically I was attracted to that building, which was Swami Sivananda's ashram.



Swami Sivananda was sitting on a pedestal giving satsang to hundreds of people. I was sitting in the very last row. After his discourse on the Bhagavad Gita, normally he would randomly select two people from the crowd for an interview. I was one of the two selected. I don't know what made him select me.

He called me to his chamber, then he looked at me and said in Tamil, 'What's your name?' 'Abdul Kalam,' I replied. 'Why are you sad?' he asked. This great one, this chosen one, this godly person, knew of my sorrow! I replied, 'Swamiji, I will tell you the facts. I had come for an interview with the Air Force Selection Board and I was not selected to be a pilot.'

Swami Sivananda looked at me. I was such a small fellow in front of him. Then he opened the Bhagavad Gita at the 11th chapter, Vishwaroopa Darshan, in which Lord Krishna appears in front of Arjuna in all His forms. When Arjuna tells Krishna he is afraid of fighting in the Kurukshetra war, Krishna tells him, 'Defeat the defeatist tendency.' That is a great message. Swami Sivananda asked me to repeat the



statement 'Defeat the defeatist tendency' three times. I repeated it three times and I was cheered up. He then gave me twenty of his books published in Tamil and English. It was such a great experience.

So, friends, I will never forget this incident in my life. I am now in the 72nd orbit of the sun, which means my age is 71. One orbit around the sun takes one year, so I have completed 71 orbits. Swami Sivananda's mantra: 'Defeat the defeatist tendency' is always with me and that great philosophy and advice which Lord Krishna gave to Arjuna always comes to me whenever I'm in trouble. I wish you all the best. God bless you."

On behalf of the Bihar Yoga family, Swami Niranjana presented the President with many gifts, and cards from the children of Munger, including one from BYMM with the

signatures of 500 children inviting the President to visit Ganga Darshan again in 2004 to celebrate Bal Yoga Diwas. Swami Niranjana gave a formal vote of thanks, but somehow it was no longer a formal occasion, and we all sincerely seconded his sentiments. The President had come to speak to the children, but he won over the sannyasins as well with his affection for the children, his enthusiasm, high ideals and the spirituality we sensed as a deep motivation.

"The President's visit must've been an extremely motivating event," said my friend.

"Oh yes, it was," I replied. "But we believe the President was equally happy to be here and to see the children's yoga movement. He kept his appointment with them. He was here again nine months later."

Sivananda Yoga

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Three thousand years ago, Rishi Patanjali propounded a sequential approach to yoga in eight stages. His ashtanga yoga represents a process of personal effort to achieve the highest in life. In the twentieth century, Swami Sivananda took yoga one step further and defined eight stages beyond Patanjali. Patanjali confined himself to the practical aspect and Swami Sivananda brought in the applied, expressive aspect for the benefit of human society.

The eight limbs of Sivananda yoga are: serve, love, give, purify, be good, do good, meditate, realize. It begins

where Patanjali yoga stops. In Patanjali yoga you practise and perfect yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana and become established in dhyana. When you are established in the meditative state, have acquired wisdom and that wisdom has become stable, *sthitaprajna*, then you may live your life like a normal person, but your intentions and motivations, the direction of the flow of your energies has changed. Previously they were selfish, self-oriented and self-centred, now they have become selfless, universal and expansive. Whereas you only thought of your own pleasure and happiness, now you begin to think of the pleasure and happiness of others.

After dhyana and samadhi, an expression of the balanced and harmonious nature is seen in service, *seva*, the first

stage of Swami Sivananda's ashtanga yoga. Selfless service becomes the medium by which we are able to externalize and express the inner peace, conviction and empathy we have gained internally. It is not social service, but serving the divine in another human being, an expression of one's connection with divinity.

Service is involving oneself in *karma*, action, but there is a difference. Initially, karmas were performed to satisfy yourself, now they are intended to help uplift others. Initially there was an expectation in the service you provided to others, now there is only *kartavya*, inherent duty. Previously you would serve those you considered your own, now your actions reach out to everyone. That is *atmabhava*. Meditation has to eventually give birth to *atmabhava*.

Atmabhava is the ability to see oneself reflected in another person. You see your reflection in your offspring and are connected with them, sympathize with them, love them and believe that child is yours because it is born from your womb. You are able to see a reflection of your soul in that child. However, when you are able to see your own reflection in everyone, that is called *atmabhava*. Service happens most efficiently when there is *atmabhava*.

There is an incident from Swami Sivananda's life illustrating *atmabhava*. One day a pilgrim on his way to Badrinath came to Swami Sivananda's dispensary. In those days there were no roads or cars, only bullock-carts and one's two legs. The pilgrim was sick. He described his problem, Swami Sivananda gave him some medicine and the pilgrim went on his way. Three hours later, Swami Sivananda felt that a better medicine could have been given. He called Swami Satyananda and told him to locate the pilgrim and give him the right medicine. That is *atmabhava*. Swami Sivananda did not need to perform this service, but he did not ignore anyone's suffering, or his responsibility, dharma or *kartavya*, because he was able to see the divine presence in everyone.



Service or seva is the only way that God has given to us to ensure that others are helped. Service is connecting with other people. Service means cooperation. In nature everything exists for others. A tree does not eat its own fruit because its nature is to give. When you pick the fruit, it may hurt the tree, but at the same time it is happy that somebody is enjoying its fruits. Human beings are the only creatures who live for themselves and yet want to attain the divine and the transcendental without any effort.

The second stage of Sivananda yoga is love, not confined or limited love but universal love. As you serve more and more, as you identify with others more and more, you purify yourself internally and an unconditioned love emanates from your being, touching everyone. Real love is not the fulfilment of your personal expectations, not sensorial, intellectual or emotional self-gratification, but the ability to understand and be one with others, to feel for others in the same way you feel for yourself. Unconditional love transcends all feelings, emotions, expectations and desires. The love of an enlightened being is universal and unconditional, embracing all equally like the rays of the sun.

The third stage is the ability to give, to be generous. After you love, you give. There is no holding back, only giving without desiring anything in return. Giving means extending a helping hand to others. Giving is the art of making others independent and free, and able to find peace and prosperity. People like to receive, and when we receive, we accumulate and attachment develops. Learn how to let go, to give and share what you have with everyone.

The fourth stage of Sivananda yoga is the effort to attain inner purity. Through service, through love, through giving, you purify yourself internally. Purification happens naturally and spontaneously when you have attained the ability to give the beauty that you have experienced. It is a feeling of wholeness, without the influence of any negative,

limiting tendencies, so you remain in a pure state of being all the time.

The fifth and sixth stages are be good and do good. When you are pure and free from the influences of the sensorial and material world, then all the good things come under your command. You become good. When you become good, you do good all the time. When you do good, you become good internally.

The seventh stage of Sivananda yoga is meditation. When you do good, again you move into a meditative state to experience your universal nature. This time meditation is not a personal effort, but a universal connection with everything. The eighth stage is realization, the same as samadhi. However, this time the universal harmony is of a different quality. It is

not the deep identification you attain after having worked through the different layers of the mind, but rather it is immersing oneself in the continued experience of the higher consciousness, which is expressed in one's life.

So we have two approaches in yoga. Patanjali's eight stages represent the personal aspiration and effort one makes to transform the quality of life and attain transcendental qualities. The eightfold path of Sivananda is a progression beyond Patanjali, where you express positively, constructively and creatively what you have attained and experienced. Swami Sivananda not only taught this yoga, but also lived it in his life, which is an example of service, love, purity and innocence. He laid out the guidelines for expressing the beauty of human character and nature. ॐ





January

Sri Swamiji gave darshan and satsang to students from Spain, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Uruguay attending an Integral Yoga Course at Rikhiapeeth, conducted from the 1st to the 6th by Swami Dharmadeva.

Swami Gorakhnath conducted courses in Jagdalpur from the 10th to 20th and in Kanker from the 21st to 31st. He also gave satsang in schools, in Kondagaon, and a program at Jagdalpur Central Jail.

A sadhana course was held at Ganga Darshan from 12th January to 7th February for female participants from Iran, led by Sannyasi Sadhanabindu. Sannyasis Atmatattwa and Achyutananda, Dr Rishi Vivekananda, Swamis Satyadharma, Sumitrananda, Dr Swamis Nirmalananda and Mudraroop, and Sannyasi Soumyashakti conducted the course.

On the 24th, Swami Atmabhishek and Dr Sannyasi Paripoornananda spoke at Mewar Chamber of Commerce and Industries Hall, Bhilwara, Rajasthan.

On the 26th, the foundation day of BSY was celebrated with havan, kirtan and satsang at

Sivananda Ashram, where Sri Swamiji established BSY 40 years ago.

Courses for employees of Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd, Sambalpur, were held at Ganga Darshan in January, February and March by Swami Taponidhi and Sannyasis Shraddhamati and Premmani.

February

YYMM conducted courses from the 1st to 7th at Barauni Refinery and at Ganga Darshan.

Swami Atmabhishek conducted camps at National Fertilizers Ltd, Naya Nangal, Punjab, from the 4th to 11th, and at Ram Dayalu Smriti Hall from the 20th to 27th, organized by Muzaffarpur Rotary Yoga Mitra Mandal. He also held a workshop from 29th February to 8th March at IIT Kharagpur.

The President of the Republic of India, His Excellency Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam was the guest at Bal Yoga Diwas, Children's Yoga Day, celebrated at the Polo Ground, Munger, on the 14th. More than 20,000 children from Munger participated.

Swamis Sumitrananda and Taponidhi and Sannyasi Kamalavasini conducted programs from the 16th to 22nd at Dhyana Yoga Kendra, Barauni Refinery, Begusarai.

Swami Niranjana was in Mumbai from the 23rd to 26th for a program organized by Satyananda Yoga Centre, Mumbai. Swamiji gave discourses at J.J. School of Arts and High Mount State Guest Home. Dr Swami Nirmalananda and Swami Gyanbhikshu also spoke at Chembur Yoga Sadhana Kendra, at the Mumbai Mantralaya and at Ghantali Mitra Mandal, Ghatkopar.

Swamiji then travelled to Nasik for a convention from 27th



February to 1st March, where he introduced 1,800 school children to surya namaskara, bhramari pranayama and Gayatri mantra, and led afternoon discussions. Swamis Anandakumar, Maitreyi, Suryaprakash, Yogaratna and Bhaktimurti, and Sannyasis Sarvatma and Ramnaumi also gave talks.

Swami Bhaktichaitanya gave programs in Pamarru in February, March and April, at Vijayawada Municipal Stadium, at Ramakrishna Ashram, Tenali, and at Siddhartha and Gautham Public Schools, Vijayawada, and at VSR Public High School, Gudlavalleru.

March

Sannyasi Dharmakirti conducted a program from the 21st to 29th at Agrasen Bhawan, Naila-Janjgir, Chhattisgarh.



Navaratri was observed from the 21st to 30th at Ganga Darshan. On the 27th and 28th, Swami Niranjana gave satsang at Chandisthan, Munger.

HMCs were conducted by Swami Gorakhnath at Rikhiapeth from the 3rd to 20th March, April, May and June.

April

Swami Atmabhishek gave camps at Patratu Thermal Power Project, organized by Damoh Mitra Mandal, at Bunda Bahu Mandir, Damoh, and at Jhanor Gandhar Gas Power Project, NTPC Ltd, Gujarat.

Swami Niranjana travelled to Mangrove Mountain, Australia, for a program from the 9th to 12th.

Swami Hrishikeshananda, Satyam Om Yoga Vidyalaya, Bilaspur,



conducted a course at the Employees Development Centre, NTPC, Korba, from the 12th to 17th.

Swami Satyadhama toured South-east Asia, conducting seminars and lectures in Singapore, China, Japan, South Korea and Hong Kong. She then gave programs in Australia from April to July, and in the USA in August.

May

Swami Niranjana was in Mallorca, Spain, from 19th to 23rd where he presided over a seminar hosted by the Satyananda Yoga Association of Mallorca in Campos.

A program was held at the Indian Oil Training Institute, Gurgaon, Haryana, from the 5th to 7th by Swamis Sumitrananda and Taponidhi.

On the 23rd, Dr Swami Nirmalananda conducted a workshop at Atma Darshan Yogashram, Bangalore. She also spoke at Shri JG Hospital and Research Centre, Ghataprabha, Belgaum, Karnataka.

Swami Anandakumar conducted a program in Mumbai from the 24th to 28th.

June

From the 1st to 10th, a program was held for teachers at Bariahi Middle School, Saharsa, by Swami Gyanbhikshu and BYB interns.



A program was held at Ganga Darshan from the 1st to 30th for students from SPIC-MACAY by Sannyasi Mangalmurti.

On the 4th, Swamis Dr Nirmalananda and Suryamani gave satsang at the Body Temple Yoga Centre, Shimoga.

On the 19th, Swami Nirnanjan spoke at Jawayat village, Bariarpur.

YYMM members conducted camps in Bhuj, Gujarat, for one month.

Swami Nirnanjan visited Bhuj from 26th June to 3rd July to celebrate Guru Poornima and inaugurate the newly constructed Sivananda Balakashram. Swamiji conducted havan with the acharyas of the Indian Satyananda ashrams. Paduka pooja to Swami Sivananda was held.

From the 4th to 8th, Swami Nirnanjan visited Dev Darshan Ashram in Bhilwara, Rajasthan, accompanied by Swami Shankarananda. He also spoke at Mewar Chamber of Commerce and at the town hall.

On the 6th, Swamiji visited Srinathdwara, Ekling Mahadeo, Chaubhuja and Kankroli, the four dhams of Mewar. He visited a local school for children with speech and hearing difficulties, and gave satsang.

Swami Atmabhishek conducted programs for senior managers at the Taph Guest House, Gujarat Refinery, IOC Ltd, Vadodara, from the 28th to 30th, and at the CISF camp, the IOC Ltd Training Institute and at the Ladies Club.

July

At Rikhiapeeth, Guru Poornima was celebrated with havan conducted by Swami Satsangi, Paduka Pooja and akhanda kirtan, during which the kanyas, batuks, pensioners and workers from the villages received prasad.

In Munger, Guru Poornima was celebrated at Sivananda Ashram with havan, Paduka Pooja, kirtan and bhajan.

Dr Swami Nirmalananda and Dr Mridula Mishra visited Indore from the 17th to 31st to launch a research project in two local schools.

Swami Srimukhananda conducted a program at Gujarat Ambuja Cement Ltd, Ambujanagar, Junagarh, from the 19th to 28th. Classes were also held for teachers and students at Bal Vidya Bhawan, Ambujanagar.

August

On the 5th, Swami Nirnanjan presented certificates to students who completed the first Diploma Course in Yoga Education.

On the 7th, Swami Nirnanjan gave satsang at Lakhisarai, Shivakund and Mirjapur villages in Munger district.

On the 15th, Swami Nirnanjan spoke to children and teachers at a camp organized by the Jharkhand Education Project Board. On the 16th, he addressed staff of Patratu Thermal Power Station, and on the 17th, he spoke to members of the Indian Institute of Coal Management.

The Radha-Krishnan Jhoolan program for Swami Satyananda's neighbours from the villages of Rikhia was celebrated at Rikhiapeeth from the 26th to 30th. Sri Swamiji gave darshan and satsang.

September

The annual program was held at Rikhiapeeth from the 6th to 12th. Stories from the Srimad Bhagavatam were narrated by Dr Akhilishananda Shastri and Kumari Bhakti Kiran from Varanasi. Swami Sivananda's birth anniversary was celebrated with chanting

of the Bhagavad Gita led by Swami Satsangi, followed by havan.

On the 12th, Sri Swamiji gave darshan and satsang, and in the evening the third BYB convocation was held during which the graduating students of 2002–2004 took the oath from Swami Satsangi, received their degrees from Swami Shankarananda and were blessed by Swami Nirnanjan.

Swami Nirnanjan gave discourses from the 18th to 20th at Gyan Manch, Kolkata, organized by the Satyananda Yoga Kendra.

On the 20th, children from classes 11 and 12 attended a 'Children's Hour' at Ganga Darshan, participating in demonstrations by BYMM children and interacting with Swami Nirnanjan.

In September and November, Swami Atmabhishek conducted programs at Vishwa Bharati School, Noida; APJ School, Sheikh Sarai, New Delhi; DPS Indirapuram, Ghaziabad, UP, and at NTPC's Tanda, UP, thermal power station.

October

A yoga program was conducted at Dhyana Yoga Kendra, Barauni Refinery, Begusarai, from the 4th to 10th by Sannyasi Sudarshan.

Swami Nirnanjan was in Jabalpur, MP, from the 6th to 9th for a Yoga Convention organized by the Satyananda Yoga Kendra.





Programs were also held in schools by BYMM and Swami Vigyanachaitanya.

Students from Shantiniketan, WB, participated in practical classes and Bhagavad Gita chanting at Ganga Darshan from the 11th to 15th.

A refresher course was conducted for Satyananda Yoga teacher trainers from India and overseas from 15th October to 13th November at Ganga Darshan. From the 1st to 7th November, Swami Niranjana conducted practical classes in the style originally taught by Swami Satyananda. Special sessions were also conducted on classroom management of obese students, yoga for the aged, yoga for children and care of the back.

In Munger, on the 16th and 17th, Swami Niranjana gave satsang at Chandisthan, Munger.

On the 23rd, Swami Satyananda gave darshan and satsang at Rikhiapeth.

On the 25th, Swami Niranjana gave satsang at Ananda Darshan Ashram, Bhagalpur.

November

From the 1st to 10th, Swami Taponidhi conducted an introductory program at NTPC, Barh.

From the 8th to 11th, railway probationers from Jamalpur attended an introductory yoga program at Ganga Darshan, conducted by Sannyasi Tapogyanam.

On the 28th, Dr Swami Nirmalananda spoke on yoga and diabetes at a camp organized by the Cardiological Society, Bihar Chapter and Yoga Kendra, Darbhanga Medical College, Darbhanga, and at Darbhanga Ladies Club on yoga and mental health.

December

At Rikhiapeth, the Rajasooya Yajna was conducted from the 12th to 16th. Sat Chandi Mahayajna was performed from the 13th to 16th to invoke the blessings of Devi, the Cosmic Mother. Durga Saptashati was chanted each morning and afternoon, and arati and pooja were conducted in the evening. The kanyas of Rikhiya hosted the daily kirtan and bhajan program and chanting of Ramacharitamangas, and led arati. On the 16th, Kanya Poojan was conducted, representing worship of the kanyas as vehicles of divine energy through the offering of food. The program culminated in havan, followed by Sita Vivah, the symbolic marriage of Sri Rama and Sita.

Prasad was distributed throughout to 5,000 participants from India and abroad. Each home in Rikhiya panchayat received grains, cooking utensils, clothing and winter accessories. Although Sri Swamiji was not physically present at the yajna, he gave numerous satsangs and darshan in the days preceding it. Tattwa Shuddhi and Ajapa Dharana courses were held at Rikhiya from the 18th to 23rd by Swamis Satyadharma and Sumitrananda. Swami Satyasangananda gave satsang.



The second visit of His Excellency, the President of the Republic of India, Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam was even more spectacular than the first. BYMM had started celebrating Swami Niranjana's physical birthday on the 14th February as Bal Yoga Diwas, and this year it was held at the Polo Ground in Munger. More than 20,000 children from 194 government and non-government schools in Munger were gathered when a squadron of helicopters appeared in the sky and circled the

crowd. They seemed so big. The children (and adults) oohed and aahed, the chop-chop sound crescendoed, the dust swirled, and out of one of the gigantic dragonflies stepped Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam with silver hair, a beautiful smile and a heart-warming message once again.

Swami Niranjana gave the welcoming speech.

"It is an honour to express our gratitude to His Excellency, the President of the Republic of India, Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, for gracing Ganga Darshan Gurukul and the town of Munger with his august presence. This town has the unique distinction of housing the first University of Yoga in the world, which is the culmination of the vision of His Holiness, Swami Sivananda Saraswati, carried forward by his illustrious disciple Paramahansa Satyananda. I have had the opportunity to meet His Excellency in the past and know that he is well-versed in the Indian spiritual lore and is ever striving to bring science and spirituality closer.

Today, on behalf of the citizens of Munger, the Bihar Yoga family and the children of Munger, I convey our gratitude to the President of the Republic of India for coming to Munger and extend an open invitation to visit Rikhiadham, the tapobhoomi, of Paramahansa Satyananda in Jharkhand."





Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, President of the Republic of India responded.

Dimensions of creativity

"I am delighted to interact with the children in this divine place. I thank the organizers of this program, the Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal, for arranging this beautiful function. Dear children, you are all in the mission of learning. What will learning give?"

*When learning is purposeful, creativity blossoms.
When creativity blossoms, thinking emanates.
When thinking emanates, knowledge is fully lit.
When knowledge is lit, the economy flourishes.*

In the dimensions of knowledge, we can see the scientific, technological history coupled with human endeavours.

Creativity changes the life pattern. What have we seen in science and technology in the last 60 years? The predictions and happenings are going at different rates and phases. What was impossible has happened and what was thought possible has not yet happened, yet will happen. Particularly in the field of aeronautics, space technology, electronics, materials, computer science and software products, the world has progressed to new dimensions and India itself is a part of these challenges. Indian bio-technologists with business houses will have the opportunity of analyzing the available genomic data, leading to production of drugs for healthcare and early treatment. Bioresearch transforming into technology will lead to higher production of agricultural products. In the coming decades, we may see the birth of unified field theory integrating gravitational forces, electro-magnetic forces and general relativity

theory, space and time as functions. Young people may also see in their time the establishment of a habitat or industry in one of our planets or moons by the human race. The world may also enter into the launch of solar power satellites through a re-usable launch vehicle (hyper plane) system for electricity needs, as fossil-based fuel will become rare in 50 to 100 years. These are possible only through creative minds.

On the successful completion of the Moon Mission, Farnbraun, a very famous rocket designer, who built Saturn-V, to launch the capsule with astronauts and make the moonwalk a reality, said, 'If I am authorized, I will remove the word impossible.'

In ancient days, Ptolemaic astronomy was a widely used system for calculating the dynamics of various stars and planets.





The assumption by them was that the earth is flat. What a scientific struggle had to take place to prove that the earth is spherical in shape, orbiting around the sun. The three great astronomers Copernicus, Galileo and Kepler had to give a new dimension to the world of astronomy. Today we take it for granted that the earth is a globe orbiting around the sun and that the sun orbits the Milky Way. All the technological advancements we have today are the outcome of scientific exploration by scientists of earlier centuries. At no time was man beaten by problems. He strives continuously to subjugate impossibility and then succeeds.

Impossibility to possibility – human flight is nothing but creativity of the human mind and it undergoes several struggles to achieve excellence. In 1890, a great and well-known scientist Lord Kelvin, who was the President of the Royal Society of

London, said, 'Anything heavier than air cannot fly, and cannot be flown.' Within two decades the Wright Brothers proved man could fly, of course at heavy risk and cost.

In India many innovations and much creative thinking took place at various phases of our development. In the 1960s Dr Vikram Sarabhai said that India should design and develop a large satellite launch vehicle and put a communication satellite and remote sensing satellite in geo-synchronous orbit and polar orbit respectively. In India this was thought impossible. But, this visionary statement ignited the minds of hundreds of scientists and technologists and thousands of technicians. Today India is capable of building any type of satellite launch vehicle and satellite.

Similarly, during the 1960s, I remember that India was in a ship-to-mouth existence for food grains. If the American ships had not brought wheat, there would have been a famine in India. But there were two visionaries who worked together with the farming community and brought the first green revolution. They are the political thinker Sri C. Subramaniam and the agricultural scientist Dr M.S. Swaminathan. Today we produce 200,000,000



tonnes of food grains, which is not only sufficient for us, but we can also export a quantity. In the 1980s India had a very low base in Information Technology. Some young entrepreneurs with their innovative and creative thoughts, within the difficult boundary conditions of India's rules and regulations, showed how IT-enabled services could fetch export revenue. Subsequently, even the government had to bring out innovative and liberalized IT policies. Now, our young IT entrepreneurs are making export revenue of 15 billion dollars. Similarly, the pharma industries are making a positive impact on the Indian economy.

Till 1953, it was thought impossible to reach the top of Mount Everest. Hillary and Tenzing disproved this impossibility. Let us take the Raman effect; till Sir C.V. Raman discovered molecular scattering, people did not know why the sea appeared to be

blue. Similarly, Chandrasekar Subramaniam asked why many stars shine and a few don't, thereby proving the 'Chandrasekar Limit', which enabled him to discover the Black Hole.

In India, in the 1960s, none of us dreamt that nuclear energy could lead to electric power generation or that nuclear medicine would be used for the treatment of thyroid disorder and in curing cancer. Homi Bhabha's vision led to the electric energy generated by nuclear power flowing into grid. By another decade, it may generate more than 20,000 megawatts of power.

Now, the indomitable spirit. Let us study the characteristics of indomitable spirit. It has two components. The first component is that there must be a vision leading to higher goals of achievement. I recall a couplet from Thirukkural by the poet saint Thiruvalluvar, written 2,500 years ago, which means that whatever may be the depth of the river or lake or pond, whatever may be the condition of the water, the lily flower always comes out and blossoms. Similarly, if there is a definite determination to achieve a goal, even if it is impossible to achieve, the person succeeds. Many of us have gone through large programs and projects. We have experienced that success is not in sight and there are many hurdles. We should never be defeated by any problems, we should become master of the situation and defeat the problems. I consider these couplets from Thirukkural characterize the indomitable spirit.

When a child is empowered by the parents at various phases of growth, the child is transformed into a responsible citizen. When a teacher is empowered with knowledge and experience, good young human beings with value systems emerge. When a leader of any institution empowers his or her people, leaders are born who can change the nation in multiple areas. When women are empowered, a society with stability is assured. When the political leaders of the nation empower the people through visionary policies, the prosperity of the nation is certain. There is a need to empower the students to explore new avenues for making faster progress in the development mission. When an individual or a team is empowered with technology, transformation to a higher potential for achievement is assured.

All our lives we need righteousness. When there is righteousness in the heart, there is beauty in the character. When there is beauty in the character, there is harmony in the home. When there is harmony in the home, there is order in the nation. When there is order in the nation, there is peace in the world.

Friends, you are young and you represent nearly half the population of the nation. Your creative mind is very powerful. An ignited mind is the most powerful resource on the earth, above the earth and under the earth. I wish you all the best."



The entire program for the President's visit had been organized by BYMM with the help of parents, teachers, principals and the district administration. The success of Bal Yoga Diwas was due to months of hard work, planning and dedication by BYMM members after the President accepted their invitation to attend during his visit to Ganga Darshan in May 2003.

Meanwhile, travellers from other countries continued to pass through Ganga Darshan. From the dusty plains of India to the heart-searing scenes in war-torn countries, it seemed a network of new inspiration had been strewn that was capable of lifting

people from the sea of suffering, whether the suffering was of prosperity or poverty, whether one saw its causes externally or they haunted the inner world. In fact, the scriptures say that devotion to the lotus feet of the guru is the hook that lifts the disciple from the sea of samskara. Swami Mudraroop brought his family to a haven of peace when he recognized a new reality.

The Swan

"Only years later did I realize the importance of the Swan in my life. He didn't fly in; he sailed into my life, quietly, on a cold winter night in 1984. Various circumstances took me to that particular point in time and space. I was about to finish medical studies with top grades, had an offer of a job in a university department, a career in a world-class sports club behind me, and good friends around me. But, deep within something was missing, something crucial was not there. There was no aim, no purpose, no direction, yet I knew there had to be more to the life than just to be born, to grow and learn, work and die, and that's it.

So there I was, on that icy winter night, in the middle of a 'bad trip', cruising through the unknown city, waiting to deliver a rent-a-car which I had driven from the centre office in Belgrade (a job that I did as a student). I was thinking how ridiculous the situation and my whole life was, when something made me stop near a huge park, almost a forest. I jumped over the fence, went into the woods and came to a lake, with fallen trees emerging from the water. Air was crisp, snow was deep, and everything was white – beautiful as only God can make it. I was absorbed by the scene. And then He came, a white Swan gliding on the black water, with no sound or wave. Everything was so subtle and in contrast to the world from which I came, that for a moment I thought, 'Maybe I'm hallucinating' (after all I had taken a hallucinogen). But no, my mind was alert and the senses sharp.

As if to assure me of his reality, Swan came very close, dipped his head in the water in front of me and gracefully glided away in perfect silence. He didn't speak to me (at least I didn't hear anything), but he did bless me. I found my way back and drove

away. This event made something in me slow down and, it made a deep impact on my life.

Travelling back home the next day I was very quiet, and soon my life took a new direction. I became involved with a spiritual group. In July 1988, a friend from the same group asked me to translate something from the book Kundalini Tantra. The name of the author, 'Satyananda', was so melodious, and 'Saraswati' radiated confidence and chastity. As I opened the book I remained fixed in the same position like a cataleptic for twenty minutes, eyes glued to the photo of the only Real Man I had seen till that moment in my whole life. His face and eyes rang all the bells of my mind, myriads of processes were going on simultaneously. The thought came from within, 'I know this man and I have to see him again.'

Some resistance was also there, but the fire was lit, and nothing could stop it now. In August there was an announcement about a BSY seminar in Yugoslavia, in September, and together with my wife Omgyanam, I attended it. I was in seventh heaven, but only until I came to know that Swami Satyananda had just left the institution and his ashram, 'to roam with Shiva's name on his lips'. Electric waves of both joy and sorrow shot up my back. I couldn't explain it, but I was so happy for him, to be free, and so disappointed for myself since he was out of reach now, and I was back at square one. I had been told he left a successor, Swami Niranjanananda, and a photo of very low quality, showing a young, thin man of my age in geru robes was shown to me.

Turbulent years followed, during which I would seek refuge in yoga only in moments of deepest crisis and calamities. And it always worked. In 1995 for the first time I was regular in sadhana, and felt a deep need for guidance. Swami Niranjanananda was the only one to whom I could turn, and his name didn't sound so strange any more. I wrote a letter, asking for advice and blessings. A real reply came sooner than the official letter, in the form of two sudden, subtle thrills that arose out of the blue from my chest one night. I had never experienced anything similar before, but I knew it didn't come from the body and I had an

idea from where it came, and what it could mean. It was my first lesson; I have to take the first step towards the guru and then he will take two steps towards me.

That winter a group from Yugoslavia was about to leave for India. The war in former Yugoslavia was at its peak, bloodshed was everywhere, and although Serbia was not directly involved in war operations, all other aspects of war were there. Living was tough, family savings were lost, Omgyanam and I were both freelancers without a steady income, and our son Om was only four – everything reasonable weighed against a journey to



India. But a magnetic force was pulling from there. Night after night I dreamt of Sri Swamiji, who would talk to me for hours at a stretch, though I could not remember a single word of it in the morning.

We decided to go, but passports were expired, and the procedure was months long, millions of refugees were in queue. We went to the Police Headquarters where there was a special counter for issuing urgent passports, but we hadn't even one of the papers necessary to allow us to approach it.

A man was passing by and I asked him for advice, telling him frankly our problem. He looked at all three of us with steel blue penetrating eyes and said, 'Come and see me tomorrow.' He entered the office, and as the door closed, there was this brass sign 'Head of Passport Department' on it. The next day we had a nice cup of coffee with him (Om had juice) and our passports were ready in fifteen minutes. We didn't have connections in the police, but the Divine connection operates anywhere, and transforms even the hardest policeman into a supporter of 'exploring the cultural heritage of the friendly country of India'.



When we reached Rikhia, satsang was going on. I didn't know where to look, both of Them were there. Sri Swamiji looked directly into my eyes only once, for a second or two that seemed an eternity, and I knew he knew everything – my past, present and future. Some burden that I had carried till that moment dissolved forever. After satsang a group of people surrounded Swamiji, and we joined them. In his presence my mind went blank. He was so perfect, far above anything I could ever imagine. I touched his feet – he was so tall that it seemed

minutes passed till I reached the ground. He just said, 'Hari Om', in an unforgettable divine, un-earthly voice. He glanced at me and rested his eyes on Om, who was sitting in my arms. He said, 'Hari Oooooom' in such a sweet, special tone. I felt Om's body softening and becoming heavy, as he smiled and replied the same. But the look on Om's face told me that in reality he belongs to this tall swami, and that I am just a 'holder', for the time being. I didn't mind it at all, since my heart had already been stolen by the same man.



I hardly spoke with Swamiji afterwards. He initiated us into jignasu sannyasa (although I was hoping for something more), and when the time came for us to leave, we went to see him. 'Swamiji, Hari Om, we are leaving,' my voice trembled a bit, as it often does in front of him. His voice reverberated throughout the room, and the purest eyes in the world looked at the deepest corners of my soul. 'Hari Om, and we shall see each other soon.' There was nothing more to be said, Om was laughing and Omgyanam was crying.

Coming back into the reality of war-induced tension, hostility and insecurity was not as difficult as I had expected



it to be. Now I had direction, I had finally found a meaning to my life. It was as if we had embarked on a train, with a ticket given by Swamiji. The whole train was moving ahead towards the Destination, and everybody slowly progressing from one coach to the next, closer to the engine, the source of Power. But it was most important to stay in the train and not jump off on some of the numerous stations en route. And things started to happen.

Life started to flow, at first like a tiny yellow stream, then over the slopes (sometimes rocky) of karma sannyasa, then down Niagara Falls into the deep lake of sannyasa – which I am

only starting to explore. Many things look familiar, and there is definitely something of that indescribable beauty which the snowy-banked lake had in 1984. And Swan is here too, gliding majestically, emanating inspiration. Is it the same Swan? Yes, He is beyond time. And for me, at a certain level, Swamiji and Sri Swamiji are One.

I waited for my chance for quite a long time, but every second was worth it. At present, I am an ugly duckling (though my hair grows grey), still learning to swim, splashing all over the place, trying to keep my head out of the water and to remember the proper movements. I have seen and experienced many things, and cravings are slowly fading away now. All I really want is to serve and follow this Swan, wherever he goes and whatever he does. My secret hope (even ducklings have them) is that maybe . . . one day . . . if I make myself ready, He will show me how to glide so perfectly as only Swans can do."

Swami Niranjan visited Bhuj this year to celebrate Guru Poornima at the new Sivananda Balakashram founded by SM and to get to know the 21 resident boys aged from 8 to 14 years. They now had an opportunity to grow and develop in a traditional ashram environment and yogic lifestyle, while simultaneously pursuing their academic studies. Swamiji went with them to temples and several times trekked to the top of the hills surrounding the ashram.

On Guru Poornima, as Swamiji conducted the havan, the air became still. A powerful force of purity filled the environment. The dancing flames of the fire seemed alive, and astonishingly – formed the mandala of Om! Camera films caught this unusual phenomenon. During the programs Swamiji also explained the aim of Sivananda Balakashram. Kachchi artists gave a musical performance, followed by dancing from the boys, who also sang a bhajan. They saw a film of the Children's Yoga Day in Munger in February, and their contemporaries in the children's organizations. The huge program concluded with their bhajan, before a gathering of 4,000 participants from all over India.

The boys suffered through an earthquake which destroyed so much that they knew and loved, but they found a support

in the ashram and yoga. And this is happening to many people around the world. Jignasu Alokamurti, from UK, has a unique story to prove the point.

Yoga never fails me

"After my initial visit to Ganga Darshan in 2002, I became excited about using my yoga practices to go deeper into myself and about learning to play with yoga to break through some difficulties I was facing in my life. When I first arrived I had given up on finding a more rewarding way of living, of finding an alternative to living on the materialistic plane. All I had learnt on my travels were ways to escape and suppress my desires, apart from the one that constantly lurks within: to live in a cave at the top of a mountain away from everything. I had become isolated and was very negative about myself. However, during my ashram stay I was slowly introduced to the tools on offer in yoga, and discovered that I couldn't get enough of it; it felt as though every practice I learned lifted me up out of my old self.

Staying in the ashram for a month or more at a time and participating in all the daily activities, I began to like myself more and more. In adolescence I had been looking for acceptance. I had wanted to be independent and liked. I had wanted to be accepted by society, by people. I still do. In those years, I couldn't get those needs satisfied, so I searched desperately for ways to escape.

Fortunately, yoga became my foremost means of escape. Now I see that what I had previously been looking for outside of myself was actually to be found inside. Over recent years, as I have progressed through my yoga sadhana and become more aware of myself, I have found a satisfyingly new experience of acceptance; I have found a security and a comfort within myself. I now feel more positive about myself and find that people respond to me more positively.

The ashram has been a safe and secure environment where I feel I have been able to explore my personality and become more accepting of my body and my intense emotions. The activities and the environment have allowed me a space in which this could happen.



I really put effort into my karma yoga and found that it helped me move through my difficulties of relating to things and to people. It was a very big learning for me when I saw that if I wanted to do something, I could put a lot of myself into it. If I am open to a situation, then everything happens, it flows. If I don't want to do things, then I straight away go into defence. I'm fortunate to be open to yoga!

My experiences during karma yoga have helped me to let go, not to get so attached. My desires to escape from the hardness of life have been replaced by a desire to live and progress through life. I sense a feeling of something deeper in my life, something beyond my difficulties.

Participating in karma yoga has helped me face myself. I now find I can 'move' through my everyday life more spontaneously, instead of constantly getting stuck. And, I do not need the external escapes so badly. (When I stayed for a while in Rikhia I didn't have any chocolate bars to help me escape! That time was a very powerful experience. I saw how I coped without the chocolate and how I developed as a result of facing myself.)



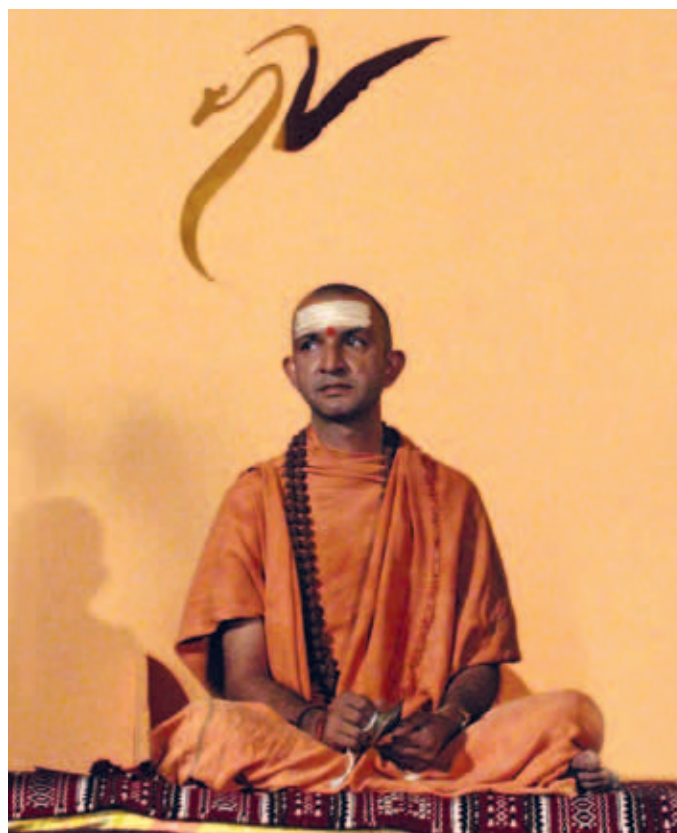
On my second visit to Ganga Darshan I joined the BYB 2002 Certificate Course. I wanted more karma yoga and to get an overview of yoga philosophy. I also wanted to learn some more postures because I have found that the effect of the yoga practices acts like an anchor so that I can go out and explore more of life and gain more independence. In fact, the most useful tools I have learned for coping with my life outside the security of ashram walls have been gained through my experiences in both Ganga Darshan and Rikhia ashrams. I have been able to help myself mentally, physically and emotionally. Participating in that course gave me the confidence to apply to



the University of Sussex in Brighton, UK and I did a course of study in Social Work.

In the past I had tried to control my anger and that usually led to a great explosion; through my practice of yoga I have learned to be more aware of this emotion and to be more accepting of it. I have become brave enough to begin to use my yoga practices to look for the source of my anger, and am learning how to use the tremendous force of it in a positive way. I can now admit that a lot of my anger came from my having a disability, cerebral palsy, and from feeling not accepted in the world. My difficulties with anger do not grow so big any more. Now I can use mantra or some other practice to break the intensity of it.

It feels so good to be able to stretch and bend it! Postures, of course, are excellent for my body; especially backward bends and any posture that exercises my spine. The effect of regular asana practice has been very practical and most encouraging, not only for myself, but also for everyone who watched me take up the discipline. I have gained more control over my body and have attained a greater sense of body posture and balance, so that now I am walking with a straighter posture and better balance. I have learnt postures to help induce deep physical relaxation and relieve muscular spasms. One of my major achievements is that I'm now able to carry cups of hot liquids without spilling the contents and burning myself. This has led to an appreciation of both tea and coffee, and I'm also able to eat my meals more easily.



I know that it is I who must put in the effort or nothing will happen. The more effort I put into life, the more I discover the sweet fruits within myself. In this way yoga never fails me. Yes, it never fails me! With my bike I hit the wall but with yoga I never hit the wall. I practise postures every morning and every afternoon. That's my base. It's what I use to avoid getting caught up in everyday things, which produce the anxieties. I find that my regular yoga sadhana produces great self-discipline. Now I cannot bear to miss my practices; I must do them as they have become a part of my day.

Yoga gives me a firmer base in the outside world. I see that when I'm training for my cycling, doing two to three hours or more daily, I become mechanical; I only think, eat and sleep cycling. My yoga practices pull me back into reality, they put everything back into perspective and give me a proper space in which to move. Also, my yoga postures and breathing practices have helped me with my whole movement on my bike. Actually, after my first visit to Ganga Darshan, after practising yoga and living here, my breathing capacity increased a massive amount. I am not a scientist so I can't say the exact degree of the improvement, but the 'scientists' who measured it were very impressed.

And when the day has been too hard, yoga nidra is there for me, for my body and for my emotions!

I have learnt practices that will eventually lead me into meditation and of these, antar mouna appeals to me the most. It has helped me to let go of much confusion in my mind. Antar mouna has taught me how not to get caught up in my thoughts and imagination, how to watch this mental activity. It has taught me how to be 'aware', and how to pull my mind back before things send me absolutely berserk and result in my becoming isolated and entrapped in its play. Yoga is playing with my mind in a positive way, and it feels good. I am using it to clean out the clutter in my mind and emotions and to give a positive direction to my life. For me, the purpose of yoga, of life, is to go to samadhi, to taste that; to find a peace within; to

find independence; to find acceptance and comfort. I've read the 'Gospel of Ramakrishna' and that has inspired me very much. Ramakrishna wanted to find God and he got on with it. He did find God.

Actually, it was after learning the practice of antar mouna and receiving inspiration from stories about Ramakrishna that I read 'The Glass Bead Game' by Hermann Hesse. Well, my calculations told me that I would reach samadhi in two weeks! Two years later I am no closer. However, the experiences during this time have taught me to appreciate myself more and I am gaining a deeper understanding of what life is.

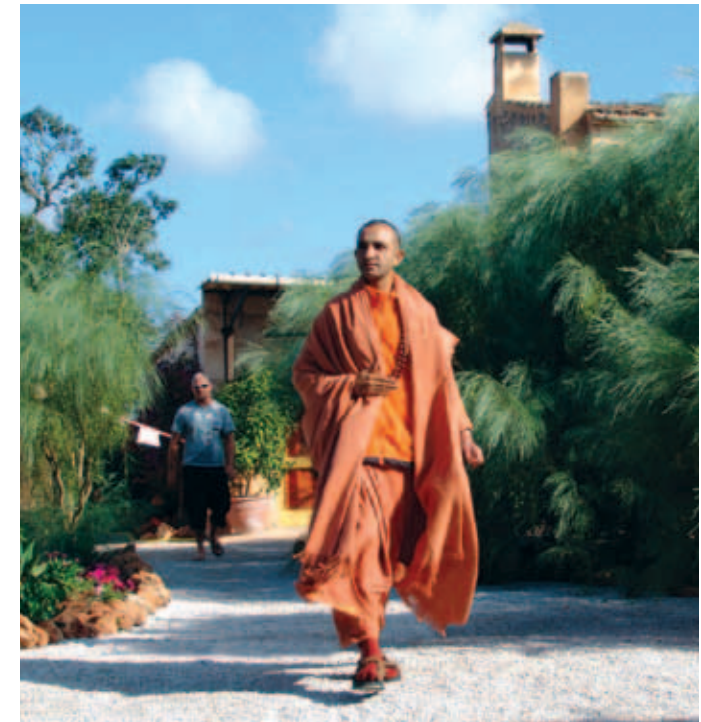
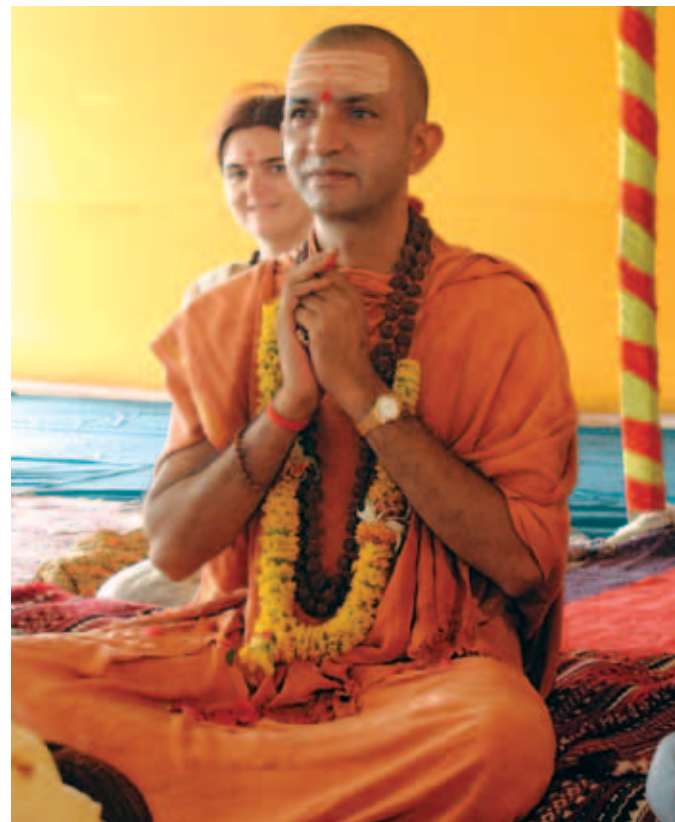
The closest I have been to a deep spiritual experience was in Cuba during Christmas 2003 when I was training to be selected for the British cycling team to compete in the Athens Para-Olympics. I was spending 10 to 12 hours of my day riding, then meditation practice in the evening, followed by sleep. This continued for three weeks. I practised antar mouna as I cycled and it was a wonderful experience. I found the practice helped me when my body was hurting and my mind was telling me to stop and find a hotel to rest and sleep in.

I met my guru, Swami Niranjana, in Wales in 1992 and asked him if he could levitate during the satsang. In response, he told me that he did not see levitation as an important goal in life, rather it would be more beneficial to learn to be able to 'stand on your own two feet'. His words inspired me and I still hold on to them. Throughout my life both my family and my close friends have encouraged me to get on with life and push through the conventional barriers that people who have a disability often face. I have always striven for independence and I feel Gururji's message echoes this.

My guru is teaching me to go with life, which I see as fair ground. The closer my bond with him develops, the more I learn to go with it and to let it flow. Oh, I have a big ego and I feel the pain of life very much! Now I see that when I'm with my ego I miss Gururji, but then at other times when I'm not caught or stuck in my mind he is with me on a higher level.

At the beginning of my discovery of yoga I was riding a roller-coaster, always enjoying the amazing highs but hiding from the intense lows. Now I feel I'm on a ghost train; the ride's fairly smooth with just the occasional fright that I try to hide from. I am looking forward to letting go more and more and to eventually ride the smooth ups and downs of the carousel. I know this will happen when I've learnt not to get caught up in what I'm doing, to open up to whatever is going to happen. Then I'll be able to see every situation as a gift from which I can learn.

Yoga is the spiritual side of myself; it gives me a sense of something very deep within. The more I surrender to guru and to the effect of the practices, the more I am able to progress. All that I have discovered through my experiences of yoga has given me an acceptance of myself, and a confidence to strive forward in life."



Those who live far from the guru discover their connection and learning in unique ways, but those who work within his (actual) hearing range for the larger part of the day, gain insights that are unique too. Sannyasi Ratnashakti, who trained as a lawyer in London, discovered Ganga Darshan in 1999 and has been here since 2002 is on top of things at 'Back Office', the central command of Swamiji's everyday agendas. She tells us what she learnt from her guru.

Like a diamond

"To describe Swami Niranjana is not an easy thing to do. If you look at a diamond, initially the eye will be captivated by the shining purity, beauty and perfection of the stone. Looking closely, however, you see that the diamond is comprised of many different sparkling facets, each one flawless and unique, reflecting the light at a particular angle. Swami Niranjana is like that – reflecting the most appropriate and creative response to every situation of life. Each time you look, there

is a different expression of his personality, character and teachings to observe.

When he is with children, he is playful like a child, mischievous and full of delight, but in a second, that child is gone, and he can be welcoming a dignitary or head of state with impeccable dignity and grace, or overseeing a huge logistical operation, issuing instructions with the command and strategic precision of an army general. In another moment, there is a fiery sannyasin forcefully expounding the way to spiritual upliftment, or a surrendered disciple carrying out the orders of his guru, with complete focus and awareness.

Swamiji can instantly assess a situation, determine what is required, and adjust accordingly. Always ready with the perfect answer or response, never can he be caught unawares. Once while travelling, we were departing Kolkata airport and it was eight months after 9/11, so security was increased, and the atmosphere was tense. Swamiji was walking in front, and had just passed through the metal detectors and the physical body search, when he turned around to watch me following. Then he smiled and before I reached the metal detector, said to the airport official, 'Wait, she will have to go through the female queue.' The official, looking very puzzled, asked him, 'This is a female? How can you tell?' At which point I became very nervous. Swamiji just smiled at the official and said, 'Well, she lives with me at the ashram, and in all that time, I have never seen her grow a beard.' With that simple answer, the whole issue was resolved.

Swamiji will use any situation, be it positive or negative, to create, improve or teach something – an opportunity never goes wasted. The incredible thing is that his mind can find an opportunity in everything, in an instant. In fact, there is no such thing as a negative situation for him – there is only something that can be improved upon. Once he told us, 'You people will spend half of your lives looking at the door that has closed and complaining, instead of turning around to see the door that has opened.'

On one occasion something had been mismanaged and as a consequence, several people were upset and offended. To rectify matters, Swamiji was instructing us as to what should be communicated and to whom. Somewhere in the discussion, an offhand negative comment was made regarding the person responsible. Immediately Swamiji said, 'No, don't be like that, it is not correct. Be against the action, not the person. Your effort should always be to correct the situation, rather than seeking to blame.' Using the opportunity, he then designed and implemented a simple yet brilliantly innovative system and procedure to ensure that the same shortcoming would not arise in the future.



In all spheres of life, Swamiji is completely fearless. But this is not some sort of bravado, it is a state of mind that comes from a natural, spontaneous and intuitive knowledge of what is right and wrong, appropriate or not. It is automatic, he doesn't have to think about it and his thoughts and actions are not subject to hesitation or doubt. Swamiji remains totally impervious to public opinion, and is the perfect instrument for carrying out his guru's instructions. Nowadays, spirituality is the new big thing, and everyone is selling it, but Swamiji does not. Instead, he tells us to focus on personal effort rather than attainment.

At a recent program, Swamiji frankly told the assembled crowd of thousands that 'Not one single person here is ready for God-realization.' He spent the next four days teaching those people how the practices of bhakti will gradually refine their mental and emotional states, and eventually culminate in shuddhi, purity. The message was that once a pure state of being is attained, realization will come by itself.

The spirit of renunciation, service, devotion and love are a constant light that is burning inside him, and his total dedication to his guru's mission is alive in every action he takes. Swamiji can be fully engaged in the tasks at hand for eighteen hours a day, or more. But once someone asked him, 'Swamiji, you work such long hours, please tell us how can we help you in your job?' His answer was instant, 'My job? My "job" as you call it is bringing in spiritual consciousness. My "job" is awakening awareness. Administration is something I do. You can consider it as my hobby. If you want to help me with that, perform your duties properly. If you really want to help me with my "job", then start living what I teach.'

Swamiji is constantly demonstrating how to kindle the inner spiritual awareness, and he can use anything, any situation, to make this happen. There is pure genius in his ability to make the most difficult concepts or processes seem simple, and apply spiritual wisdom to the everyday and mundane activities. Once he told me, 'Look after the small details of life. Do the small things properly, and the big things will take care of themselves. This is the secret.' You can see this in even the simplest of his actions; they are a testimony to the integration of the highest ideals in behaviour and life.

One day, during a sudden rainstorm at Ganga Darshan, Swamiji left the office, accompanied by several people, one of whom did not have an umbrella. Instead of suggesting that the person share an umbrella with someone else, Swamiji immediately offered shelter under his own, and they began walking arm in arm down the path. Seeing this, I ran up with another umbrella, and passed it to the guest, unopened. Swamiji then extended his arm completely over that person's head,



making sure they would not get wet while opening the new umbrella. Only once the guest was happily holding the umbrella in position above his head, did Swamiji use his to stop the rain falling on his own.

His teachings are ruthlessly practical, which is sometimes not easy if you have a tendency to float around with your head in the philosophical clouds. Although he has told us that ‘awareness is the homogeneous, extrovert application of all the faculties – where one knows everything that is happening both externally and internally simultaneously’, Swamiji is also a living example of that ability.

Once while he was conducting a program in Australia, a child began to cry somewhere outside the sadhana hall, and while

Swamiji was speaking, this child’s wailing was getting louder and louder. He didn’t get annoyed, or distracted, but nor did he ignore the situation. Instead, while he was in the middle of explaining the technical definition of samadhi, Swamiji simply said, ‘Somebody should go and check if everything is all right, and if any help is needed,’ and then, recommenced his satsang from the exact word at which he had stopped.

In one way or another, Swamiji is constantly giving and the warmth and affection with which he gives, would melt even the stoniest of hearts. On one occasion a devotee had given him a beautiful silk kurta, which was slightly the wrong size. One of the Ganga Darshan swamis immediately set about getting it altered, carefully getting the measurements correct and

supervising the stitching work, and when it was completed, proudly showed Swamiji the finished product. He just smiled, said ‘Beautiful,’ and kept the kurta beside him. Later on, he called one of the overseas guests, who was the same height, and holding the kurta smilingly said, ‘Look, I have something for you, and it should fit perfectly.’

In innumerable ways Swamiji is an inspiration and his presence is a constant reminder to improve one’s performance, manage the mind and strive for excellence in life. Although the depth of his wisdom is unfathomable, everything he does and says is a clue, which if picked up, analyzed, and put into practice, will transform your life. The best part is – that is why he does it.”



Message to Young Entrepreneurs

(Talk to Young Presidents Organization, Bangalore)

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

When we reach the pinnacle of material achievement, we often ask ourselves the question, “What now? Where do I go from here?” I, too, have asked this question. I am also the president of a ‘multi-national corporation’, and once I was also a young president – I took over the Bihar School of Yoga at the age of twenty-three. So, as a sannyasin my role is different, and as president of an organization my role is different. There came a time in my life when I asked, “Now where?” I had come to a point of external achievement – being the head of a global yogic movement, managing different centres and people, trying to fulfil their expectations, and creating newer and better programs to help others.

In the course of time, a thought built up in the mind: “Is this what I am supposed to do all my life? As a sannyasin, is this the life I must lead? I left a family of four, with the idea of renunciation, and here I am stuck with a family of 400,000. I left the idea of filling in income tax forms at home, and here I am filling in tax forms for many different organizations. What have I done? What have I renounced? Nothing. Rather, I have taken more responsibilities upon myself. The public has placed a trust in me and I cannot ignore that. Is this how I am going to live and eventually die?” These thoughts went around in my mind for many years. I was trying to find a balance between my aspiration, which was that of a sannyasin, and my obligation and commitment to the organization I was heading.

Then, one day, I noticed something which was always there in front of my eyes, but which I had ignored: the life of my own teacher, my own guru, Swami Satyananda. There came a time in his life when he said, “Enough of heading an



institution. I did not come to the path of sannyasa to become a guru, leader of a movement or head an organization. My purpose was to attain inner purity, to discover the potential inherent in every individual. I did all this to exhaust my ambitions, desires, karmas and samskaras, and now with no ambitions left, having attained everything I ever wanted to attain, I can be free.”

Herenouncedeverything. Herenouncedtheestablishment he had created, and left to lead a secluded life. However, in that seclusion a transformation took place. He received an inspiration, a mandate, a vision, which he attributes to God. The message he received in the vision was: “Provide your neighbours with the same facilities that I have provided you with.” He started to think, “What has God given to me? God has always ensured that I have food to eat, clothes to wear, a shelter to live in. This is what I need to do for other people.” He said to us, “This is the mandate I have received. I have nothing; I have renounced everything, so I am passing on the baton to you. You fulfil this mandate.”

We started to serve the underprivileged and deprived people of society. With this service came various realizations which are very valid for our present-day lifestyle and environment. When we ask ourselves the purpose of our life, ultimately, three things are relevant. The first is *sanyam*, knowing how to restrain ourselves. In the absence of restraint, there is no end to ambition. These eventually lead one astray, destroy one’s peace of mind and the state of contentment. The second purpose is developing the qualities of the heart. A human being is a combination of the faculties of head, heart and hands: intellect, sentiments and action. Most often, we highlight the use and faculties of the intellect, and relegate the faculties of the heart – sentiments and feelings – to the background, thinking that if we express them, people will consider us weak and manipulate us. The third purpose is to help others, to look beyond actions and performances that are self-centred and self-oriented, and are intended to fulfil our own needs.

So these are the three components that have to be managed: restraint, cultivation of the softer qualities of life and learning to lend a helping hand. If you adopt any of the three as your aim in life, cultivate a particular attitude and mentality, you will discover that the vacuum that you feel after having attained the peak of material prosperity is filled. This is the message given in the Upanishads as well.

Now, let us analyze the first component, restraint. There are too many distractions inherent in the modern lifestyle. We want to play with every new thing that comes in the market because it helps us boost our self-image, our ego. It is no doubt true that money brings vices with it. This is because now one has more confidence in the green paper than in one’s own abilities. And when we lack inner confidence, the mind, body and the family fabric become weak. Confusion, stress and anxiety become the order of the day. This is constantly happening to us. We are unable to manage pressures and

stresses. We are unable to manage our own dissatisfactions, and there is always a craving to find the missing link. We are always trying to find something which will make us more fulfilled, contented and happy.

Yoga says that if we are able to restrain some of the dissipated and destructive flow of energy and action, we will become more creative. But how can one acquire the quality of restraint? There is a practical method, a theory, which I call the SWAN principle. SWAN is an acronym for Strength, Weakness, Ambition and Need. To practise it, on a sheet of paper, in one column make a list of all your strengths, all your positive qualities. In another column make a list of all your weaknesses and shortcomings that you feel inhibit your growth and clarity of mind. Now make a list of your ambitions. Even if you want to acquire the moon, write it down. Make another list of your immediate needs and long-term needs, the bare minimum that you require in order to lead a fulfilled and satisfied life. Maintain these four lists, look at them from time to time, and cross out and add until you are satisfied that they reflect a true picture of your character and personality.



Now, pick one strength and cultivate that to the maximum. Do not go overboard, use your common sense. Next, pick one weakness, and try to overcome it in one month. Try to analyze an ambition. Does it reflect your innermost desire or not? Try to analyze your needs, and find a balance between your ambitions and needs. Transcend and overcome one weakness, cultivate one strength, and find a balance between ambition and need. Spend five minutes every day doing this; sit down quietly by yourself when you come home, and reflect upon this. In this way, with the development of an awareness of your performances during the day, you will be able to develop a good structure of restraint. You will be able to function using optimum strength, having transcended the weaknesses and debilities of the personality, and knowing the difference between need and ambition.

The second point is developing the soft qualities of life. People have always believed that brilliance or genius is determined by the highest IQ. However, in this century, people are not thinking about IQ any more. They are thinking about EQ, emotional quotient. You can no doubt raise



your level of intelligence, but at what cost? Besides, such development of intelligence is directed towards material understanding, not personal understanding. A basic flaw in our life is that we are not educated. I am not talking about degrees and diplomas, university, school and college, where we are educated to cultivate, nurture and develop the intellect. But we do not have any experience of life. Nobody has taught us how to face problems and stresses. Nobody has told us: "Whenever you are under stress, lie down on the bed or on the ground and count your breath back from 30 to 1." We do not know a simple thing like that. We study medicine, law and science, we study for an MBA, but we do not study human character and behaviour or how to modify them. This is a great flaw in our education system, and it will take its toll on humanity one day when we discover that we are unable to face even the least amount of tension and stress.

Developing EQ, emotional quotient, or making our feelings more expansive and soft, is another direction in which life has to develop, especially in the case of achievers. You need to have a philosophy of life, which need not be a religious belief. It is irrelevant what religious path you follow or whether you are a believer or non-believer. You need to have a philosophy in life which guides your performance and defines your aspiration.

What kind of a philosophy should that be? It should be to overcome the negative traits and restrictive qualities of life and to cultivate the benevolent and peaceful aspects. How do you do it? Practise 10 minutes of meditation every night before going to sleep. This is an effort you should make for the sake of your own sanity and peace. Allot 23 hours and 50 minutes to your society, family, profession, the world, and 10 minutes for your peace, benefit, tranquillity and sense of well-being. For these 10 minutes, sit down quietly and develop a thought or idea in the mind: "For

these 10 minutes I am not this body, nor the experience of comfort and discomfort associated with the body. I am not the mind, nor the experience of pleasure and pain that arise in the mind.” Try to create total dis-identification, total disconnection from the physical and the mental experiences. Now, if you are not the body, if you are not the mind, then what are you? Just yourself, nothing more. And in that experience of yourself, experience the space, stability and silence within.

if you encounter the same situation again. In a better way or in a worse way?

If you continue to do this every day for a month, you will find that your responses have changed. Instead of going like a bull in a china shop and shattering everything around, you are more careful, more conscious, more aware of what you are doing and more in control of your responses. You will be able to manage your levels of stress



Next, quickly review the activities of the day: “I woke up at this time in the morning, I had this for breakfast, I wore this, I read this, I saw this, I spoke this, I did this, I did that.” If you find a challenging situation in which you reacted in a particular manner, then hold the reel there for few moments. Freeze the recording, look at it, and think how you will react

better by acknowledging them and saying, “Tomorrow I will find a better way to deal with this situation. I will not subject myself to the same agony that I underwent today.” Cultivation of awareness will take place with this meditation. After having reviewed the activities of the day, observe the flow of the natural breath for five minutes,

and try to take long, deep and slow breaths. This completes your 10-minute meditation practice.

You do not need to replace other practices or rituals that you may or may not be following. Include this meditation as a habit in your life, not as something you are forced to do. Without any complication, in a very simple manner, sit down, become still, dis-identify with the body and the mind, review the activities of the day, analyze and say to yourself, “Tomorrow I will deal with this situation in a better way,” plan, observe the breath, relax and stop. That’s the meditation.

As you become more aware of your unconscious reactions and responses through this process, you will find that you begin to cultivate the softer qualities of life. These qualities come with understanding, with putting oneself in others’ shoes, knowing the difficulties they are facing, and trying to find a compromise, balance and harmony between them, between your aspirations and others’ performance.

The third component is lending a helping hand. This is the most important thing in life, because it allows you to connect with other beings. Humanity is one single club; there is no elite group and no deprived group. The groups may exist socially and economically, but as part of the life experience that we are all undergoing, there is no separation. Some people have had the opportunity to express themselves and others have not had such an opportunity. When their time comes, they too will shine. After all, it is the same brain, the same mind, the same force in each and every one; the application depends on the opportunities that one gets in life.

Swami Sivananda was an advocate of humanity. By profession he was a medical doctor, but he left his lucrative practice to become a sannyasin. And he became a sannyasin of the highest quality. There is a difference between those who take sannyasa because they are committed and those who are escaping from life. There are people who take sannyasa

to escape from life, and there are people who take sannyasa because they want to commit themselves to help others grow and prosper. There are many who belong to the first category and a few who belong to the second. Swami Sivananda had only one aim in mind: “How can I help another person attain health, peace and prosperity?” And it is his teachings that are being lived in the institutions that are created in his name, Sivananda Math and the ashram.

Swami Satyananda also says that there is much hypocrisy in our lives. Life should be innocent, simple and joyous. We put on different masks every moment to project ourselves in a particular way. Even when we look at ourselves in the mirror, we have the mask on. We want to see ourselves differently, not as we are. We become so used to seeing ourselves in the mask that when we remove it, we don’t recognize ourselves any more. “Am I really like this?” is the question that comes.

The only way we can feel free internally is by experiencing oneness, *atmabhava*, being able to see ourselves in other people. This is when we begin to understand them and their situations. Having come to this point, if we are capable, we should help them out. If not, we should direct them to somebody else. But a movement of cooperation must take place between human beings, not to satisfy our egos, but to help others come out of their misery.

There is a famous saying: “If a person is hungry, don’t give him fish to eat, but teach him how to fish.” This has been the principle of Swami Sivananda. He did not believe in charity; he said that charity is the mother of poverty, dependence and weakness. He always emphasized the role of *purushartha*, self-effort and self-empowerment. To lend a helping hand, therefore, means that you empower another person to manage and look after their own life and be responsible for their peace and prosperity. This is the actual meaning of the phrase ‘lend a helping hand’. And this is the idea of service or *seva*.

Swami Satyananda tells us, “If you go to the market to buy shoes or clothes for your two children, instead of buying two pairs, buy three. Two for your own children and one for the unknown child that you have adopted in your mind.” There are enough deprived people in the world to whom you can give that pair of shoes or that uniform, and they will cherish it for the rest of their lives. They will always remember the kindness showered upon them. If every affluent citizen looks after the needs of one deprived citizen, in ten years there will be no poverty anywhere. All you have to do is see yourself in that deprived state. We are very fortunate that we have enough to eat and also to waste. Eighty percent of the population in this country does not receive a square meal a day. They are our fellow beings who need some encouragement, who need to know that they have not missed all the opportunities in life and that somebody is looking after them. If this becomes your one activity in life, you will die happy, knowing that you have brought smiles to one person or family. When you have this realization, it will be a day of great satisfaction.

The three concepts of restraint, developing the softer qualities of the heart and clarity of mind, and lending a helping hand provide a definite direction and purpose to life, which acquisition of material prosperity cannot do. Today, we do need a direction in life. In this context, yoga assumes significance. Yoga is not what you read, hear about or see in the media. Yoga is a lifestyle, it is an attitude of the mind, it is cultivation of the best that a human personality can offer. Yoga is developing and integrating the faculties of head, heart and hands. Yoga provides a method; it is also a tool to discover the excellence within. Once we discover the excellence, efficiency, clarity, awareness and understanding within, they reflect in our outer behaviour, in our performance and actions, and in our way of thinking.

By following these three simple precepts, we begin to involve ourselves in the practice of yoga. Making a list of



our strengths, weaknesses, ambitions and needs, and being objective about it, is *swadhyaya*, self-observation. When you do not know how to control the frustrations and anxieties of life, what is the use of trying to find something which goes beyond the realm of thought and idea? One has to prepare the ground, like a farmer prepares the ground to sow seeds. Unless the ground is prepared, you can throw high quality seeds on it and they will never flower. But if the ground is prepared, there is a possibility that the majority of the seeds will flower. So prepare the ground. It is by following these precepts that I have been able to overcome the question “What next?” and you will be able to, too. ॐ



January

Yoga courses were held at Ganga Darshan for employees from Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd, Sambalpur, Orissa, from the 23rd to 29th January, 20th to 26th February and 13th to 19th March.

In January and February, Swami Atmabhishek conducted programs in Noida at the Army Public School and YMM, and at Vadodara, Gujarat, for the Retired Officers Forum. In March, he taught in Motihari and Betiah, Bihar, and in April conducted a camp at Yoga Dhyana Kendra, Barauni Refinery.

Satyananda Yoga Kendra, Indore, MP, conducted classes in Indore during January and February, and YMM members conducted classes for one month prior to the Yogotsav.

February

An intensive one-month course in yoga therapy was held at Ganga Darshan for yoga teachers from Iran.

Swami Niranjana was in Indore from the 24th to 27th for the Yogotsav held at the Abhay Prashal Indoor Stadium Complex. On the 26th, he spoke

at a program organized and conducted by BYMM, Indore.

From the 24th to 27th, Dr Swami Nirmalananda gave workshops for members of the IMA, Indore, and spoke to doctors at Indore's Medical College on yoga therapy and research. A seminar was held at GSIT's engineering college, Indore, by Swamis Vigyanachaitanya and Suryaprem.

March

From the 1st to 3rd, Swami Niranjana conducted a morning sadhana program at Vitten Marketgrounds and evening satsangs at Bharat Heavy Electrical Ltd (BHEL) YMM's auditorium. At the Madhya Pradesh Vidhan Sabha he addressed ministers and MLAs, IAS officers and staff. It was the first time a spiritual leader addressed the MP Legislative Assembly. On the 3rd, Swamiji addressed doctors and paramedical staff at BHEL's Kasturba Hospital.

On the 10th, Swami Niranjana addressed ladies at the Dr Manju Meharia Memorial Marwari Mahila program, and spoke at Bokaro Steel Plant and at the Chamber of Commerce.

On the 27th and 28th, Swami Sumitrananda conducted a program for Satyananda Yoga Kendra, Kolkata.

In March and April, Swami Bhaktichaitanya conducted a program at Gautam Junior College, Goodavalli, a seminar at the Air Force Academy Yoga Kendra, New Delhi, and a talk at ISKCON, Vijayawada.

April

Swami Niranjana was in Australia from 25th March to 2nd April, where he conducted a seminar at the Satyananda Yoga Academy, Mangrove Mountain. On the 2nd, he was the chief guest at the Sydney Yoga Expo, Darling Harbour, Sydney.



Dr Rishi Vivekananda gave programs in South America in April and May, and participated in the yoga conventions in Bogota and Cartagena. In June and July he gave programs in the USA. From 2nd April to 8th May, Swami Satyadhama gave programs in Singapore, in Shijiazhuang and Beijing, China, in Tokyo and Ibaraki, Japan, and in South Korea and Hong Kong. From the 14th May to 7th August, she conducted programs in Australia. On the 23rd and 24th, Swami Niranjana gave satsang at Chandisthan, Munger.

May

Jnana Darshan Yogashram, Bhilai, conducted programs for students at Prajapati Brahmakumari Sansthan in May, at Kanyakubja Chetana Manch and at the Russian Complex in June, and at Kalyan College in August.

Swami Niranjana was in Bogota, Colombia, from the 16th to 26th for an International Yoga Convention, organized by the Satyananda Yoga Academy, and held at the Casa Dann Carlton Hotel. Swamiji gave lectures at the Santillana Foundation, the National University and Jorge Tadeo University. From the 27th to 29th, Swamiji also conducted a program in Cartagena.

From the 23rd to 29th, Swami Anandakumar conducted programs in Mumbai.

A program was conducted from the 23rd May to 1st June at NTPC, Farakka, WB, by Swami Taponidhi.

Swami Atmabhishek conducted camps in Jammu, J&K, Aurangabad, MS, and Greater Noida, UP.

June

From the 1st to 15th, YYMM and BYMM members conducted classes for primary and middle school teachers in Jabalpur.

From the 2nd to 5th, BYMM conducted a yoga course at the Polo Ground, Munger.

Swami Niranjana was in Greece from the 3rd to 5th for a program at Satyanandashram Greece.

On the 6th, Swamiji gave satsang in Cologne, Germany.

July

Swami Hrishikeshananda conducted a program from the 11th to 15th at NTPC, Korba.

At Satyananda Ashram, Rajnandgaon, Nehru Yuva Kendra conducted a program from the 11th to 21st July. Camps were conducted from the 10th to 18th August at Dhamtari, CG, and from the 22nd to 31st August at Durg, CG.

Swami Niranjana was in Bhubaneswar for Guru Poornima, which was held at the Satyananda Yoga Ashram from the 18th to 21st. At Rikhiapeeth, Swami Satyananda gave darshan at the Guru Poornima celebrations on the 21st.

In Munger, Guru Poornima was celebrated at Sivananda Ashram.

From the 22nd to 25th, Swami Sumitrananda conducted an introductory yoga program at Rikhiapeeth.

A program was held at Yoga Dhyana Kendra, Barauni Refinery Township, from the 24th to 31st by Dr Sannyasi Paripoornananda and Omyantra.

Swami Atmabhishek conducted yoga camps from 27th July to 3rd August at the Officers Club, Urjanagar, Mahagama, Bihar. Swami Niranjana gave satsang on the 29th.

August

Swami Niranjana was in Delhi from the 5th to 7th for a program at the University of Delhi, at the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industries, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel and at the Chinmaya Mission Centre. Swamis Vigyanachaitanya and Sannyasi Tapogyanam also gave classes.

Swami Satyadhama toured North America from 9th August to 17th October.

A yoga sadhana shivir was held at Rikhiapeeth from the 14th to 16th by Swami Gorakhnath, with daily satsang by Swami Niranjana and Swami Satsangi.



Swami Satyananda gave satsang during the Sri Radha Krishna Jhoolan Mahotsav at Rikhiapeeth from the 16th to 19th.

From the 26th to 28th, Swami Sumitrananda conducted a preparatory kriya yoga program, organized by the Satyananda Yoga Kendra, Kolkata.

From August to October, Dr Rishi Vivekananda gave programs in Hungary, Bulgaria, Italy, Serbia, Greece, Germany, France and Wales. Swami Atmabhishek conducted a camp at NTPC, Korba, in August. He also spoke to teachers at Delhi Public School, to doctors and paramedical staff at NTPC Hospital, to NTPC departmental heads and to executive trainees at the NTPC Training Institute.

September

From the 1st to 6th, at BHEL, Bhopal, Dr Swami Nirmalananda conducted workshops for doctors and paramedical staff at Kasturba Hospital, and at BHEL YMM. She also spoke to members of the IMA and WIPS (Women in the Public Sector).

Swami Niranjan visited Yoga Darshan Ashram, Sambalpur, from 2nd to 8th September, where he presided over the 7-day narration of Srimad Bhagavatam and gave satsang.

On the 12th, Sri Swamiji's sannyasa anniversary, the 4th Convocation of BYB was held at Ganga Darshan.

From the 19th to 23rd, Swami Anandakumar conducted a program in Mumbai.



From the 22nd to 25th, Swami Niranjan presided over a Yoga Mahotsav at Jagdalpur, Bastar, CG. The education session was attended by the Chief Minister of Chattisgarh, Dr Raman Singh, children and teachers. Swamis Gorakhnath, Vigyanchaitanya and Asheshananda gave practical classes.

On the 24th, Swami Niranjan visited Mata Rukmini Devi Seva Sansthan, at Dimripal, a charitable institution which provides for the education of tribal girls in an ashram environment, where he gave satsang on yoga and lifestyle. On the 26th, Swamiji addressed devotees at Kondagaon.

Swami Atmabhishek conducted yoga camps in September at Uttam Girls School, Ghaziahad, UP, at NMDC Ltd, Deposit No 5, Bacheli, Dantewara, CG, and in October at the Army Postal Service Centre, Kamptee, Nagpur.

October

An in-service training program for teachers from Satyananda Yoga Kendras in India was held at Ganga Darshan from the 2nd to 14th.

Students from Shantiniketan, WB, attended a program on the Bhagavad Gita from the 7th to 16th at Ganga Darshan.

On the 14th, Swami Niranjan conducted kirtan and satsang at Dashbhuji Durga Mandir, Munger.

On the 15th and 16th, Swami Niranjan gave satsang at Chandisthan, Munger.

Swami Satyadharma gave programs in Germany from 18th October to 1st November and for the first Yogic Studies Course conducted in Hungary by SYA Europe.

From the 24th to 29th, Railway Probationary Officers from Jamalpur attended a program at Ganga Darshan.

An introductory kriya yoga course was conducted at Ganga Darshan from 24th October to 1st November by Swami Yogakanti.

From 29th October to 3rd November, Notre Dame sisters from Korea, USA and Papua New Guinea attended an introductory yoga and ashram life program at Ganga Darshan with Swamis Sumitrananda and Yogakanti.

In October and November, Swami Bhaktichaitanya conducted yoga programs in Chennai.



November

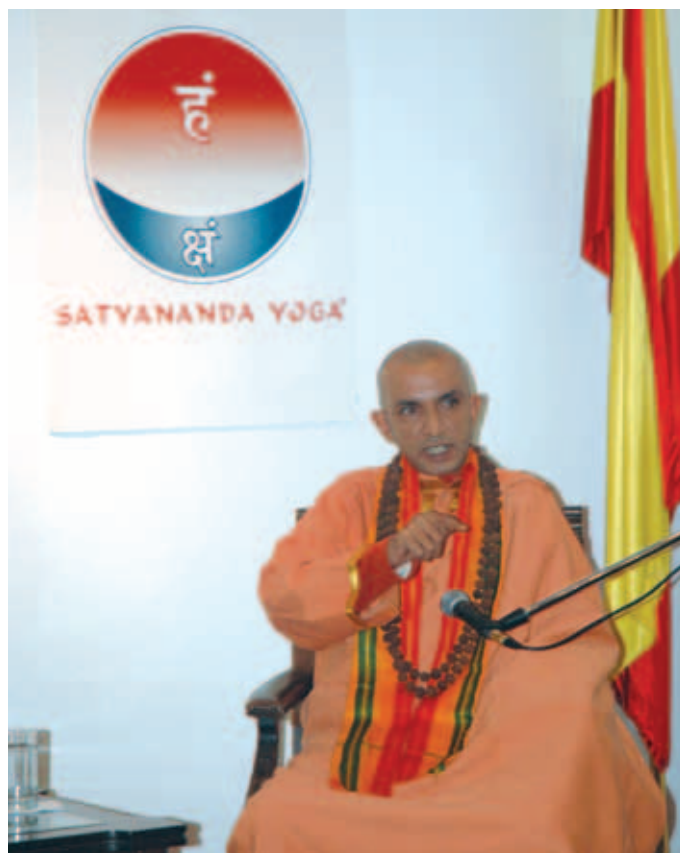
Swami Niranjan was in Kolkata from the 4th for a program at G.D. Birla Sabhaghar, organized by the Satyananda Yoga Kendra.

On the 6th and 7th, Dr Rishi Vivekananda gave a program in Mumbai.

Swami Atmabhishek conducted yoga camps at Kiran Memorial Public School, New Delhi, and at ACC Ltd's Lakheri Cement Works, Lakheri, Rajasthan.

December

The Rajasooya Yajna and Sat Chandi Mahayajna were conducted at Rikhiapeeth from the 2nd December to invoke the blessings of Devi, the Cosmic Mother. The kanyas and batuks hosted the entire event and led the chanting and kirtan. Durga Saptashati



was chanted by the pandits from Varanasi each morning and afternoon, along with arati and pooja in the evenings. On the 1st December, Sri Swamiji gave darshan and satsang on the significance of yajna. Kanya Pooja was held on the 6th December, during which the kanyas and batuks were offered food and special gifts. Sita Vivaha, the symbolic marriage of Sri Rama and Sita, concluded the program. Prasad was distributed to participants from India and abroad. Families from Rikhi panchayat received rice, clothing, kitchen utensils, agricultural tools, household items, and winter bedding.

An introductory Nada Yoga program was conducted by Swami Anandakumar at Ganga Darshan from the 8th to 11th for students from Colombia.

Swamis Satyadharma and Vigyanachaitanya conducted a Tattwa Shuddhi Course at Rikhiapeeth from the 9th to 14th. Swami Satsangi gave satsangs.

Swami Satyananda gave satsang during the Christmas celebrations at Rikhiapeeth.



The focus had changed in the last few years. The seeds of yoga had been planted widely and the results were now being harvested. Now we were beginning to see the long-term effects of yoga on individuals and society.

Swamiji appeared to be taking the mission of yoga one notch up when he visited Colombia this year and spoke on subjects such as 'Yoga in the 21st Century', 'Yoga and Expansion of Consciousness', 'Managing the Mind through Yoga'. During his visit, two ancient fire rituals were performed in the same spirit for the first time in history: a traditional Mayan solar fire ceremony was conducted during the day by Don Cirilo Perez Oxlj, a Mayan spiritual leader, and a vedic havan was conducted by Swamiji the same evening. In fact, an ancient Mayan prophecy said that fire from the East and fire of the Mayans would meet, fire secrets would be traded, and it would happen on 23.05.05, which corresponded to Buddha Poornima, the day of Buddha's enlightenment.

At the Guru Poornima celebrations in Bhubaneshwar this year, Swamiji gave the new sadhana of chanting Mahamrityunjaya and Gayatri mantras 11 times each. This must be accompanied by the sankalpa to strive for excellence in thought, word and deed in order to become truly human and to be able to work for the upliftment of humankind, he told the aspirants.

During his visit to Bhopal, Swamiji addressed the Madhya Pradesh Legislative Assembly. In a hard-hitting talk to the gathered legislators, he told them that the government should stop interfering with yoga, for a yogic syllabus cannot be created by bureaucrats who have never experienced yoga.

At another program conducted in Jagdalpur, Bastar, CG, over 5,000 people gathered to attend Swamiji's inspiring satsangs. He also visited the Yoga Darshan Ashram in Sambalpur to preside over

the seven-day narration of Srimad Bhagavatam by Dr Akhilananda Shastri and Kumari Bhakti Kiran from Varanasi. Here Swamiji gave daily satsangs on bhakti and Swami Sivananda's teachings as well as delighting all present with bhajan and kirtan.

"Bhakti is a subject Swamiji speaks on quite often these days, doesn't he?" asked my friend as she walked with me while I lit the evening dhunis at the six chosen locations in the ashram – a ritual initiated by Swamiji that all residents participate in devotedly.

"Yes, but he makes it clear that bhakti is not the mere act of a ritual or emotional outpouring. It is an attitude, a way of life, that flowers when the connection with the source comes alive. If, for example, I surrendered to the force inherent in the lighting of this dhuni and allowed it to bring a qualitative change in my mind, it becomes a means to experience bhakti. Otherwise I am doing it in vain," I tried to explain to my listener.

There are times, however, when the force carries you along and bhakti is experienced, realigning your perspectives whether or not you asked for it. Sannyasi Madhumati knows what that is. A barrister from Australia with a taste for justice and a very exacting mind, she received a glimpse which gave her the steely determination to follow the path even when it becomes so hard one can hardly walk at all.



Universal compassion

"I first met Swami Niranjan before I'd ever met him. During a very busy and stress-filled period, eventually it became too much and late one night I suddenly found myself in a state unlike anything I'd ever experienced before or since. It was a state of utmost distress, fear and horror, without any particular focus. It completely overwhelmed me, subsuming every aspect of my being and existence, so that all that existed for me was that distress and horror. It encompassed everything. My whole body was shaking and I was crying, unable to stop. There was nothing at all that I could do to help myself, to take even a small step towards getting out of that state. I could not move, I could not think, and time no longer had the same meaning. There was only this awful state.

There was a tiny part of me inside watching this happen, and it wondered faintly, 'What will happen next? Because you are not getting out of this.' But there was no answer and I could only remain in that desperate condition.

I don't know how much time passed, but at some point I suddenly became aware that someone was in my room, looking at me. And there was Swamiji, who I had only ever seen in a video, standing three metres away. First of all, the part of me that could, wondered how he'd got inside the house. It looked exactly as if he was physically there, but his form appeared slightly obscured or distant and I realized it was a different sort of presence. He spoke, and his voice was altered, as if speaking from another medium, not through air. The words seemed to be in a special language I'd never heard before, but I knew I could have understood them if they hadn't been muffled.

Once I realized I couldn't comprehend the words, I just watched his face and listened to his voice, calmly explaining. And gradually his presence soothed and calmed me, and the extreme distress, fear and trembling began to lessen. As it diminished, Swamiji left, and within what seemed moments, though still unable to stop crying, I fell deeply asleep.

I will never know what would have happened if Swamiji had not intervened that night, but I have always felt that his presence prevented my life taking a very different and negative direction, and that he gave or preserved the possibility of living a positive, useful life. To me, this experience demonstrates the greatness, compassion and grace of guru. Without ever having met me, and from another country altogether, Swamiji was aware of my distress and need, and came to give freely the help that was needed, without asking anything in return. Who else crosses the street, let alone half the globe, to help someone they've never met?

Immediately afterwards, I was left with the strong impression that Swami Satyananda had sent Swamiji to help me. Whether this was true specifically or in a general way, I don't know, but in either case it shows the deep humility of Swamiji. It also left me feeling connected to both of them.

And they did not stop there. Within a couple of months, I found myself at Rikhia for the Sat Chandi Mahayajna and shortly afterwards I received mantra diksha from Swami Niranjan at



Ganga Darshan. For three years, I was not able to see the benefits of mantra, and wondered what lasting effect it was having. I continued practising it, and then suddenly the realization came that all the positive changes that had occurred in my life were due to the guru mantra. I was not able to see and understand the process, but this realization came with the strength of conviction and could not be doubted.

At the same time, I was drawn more and more to spend time in the ashrams. It became the only time I felt truly happy and truly alive. Ashrams are one of the special gifts of guru. They are a place where we are supported in our efforts to learn about life and live in a better way. Through the blessing of seva, the feeling of dedication is imbibed and an expanded vision of life is given, so that we are taken step by step from a totally self-oriented way of being towards feeling part of a greater, beautiful whole. I am learning to accept my nature as it is and connect with myself in a much deeper way, finding inner stability and strength. This then allows a spontaneous

connection with others, with nature and with life's processes that is more natural, harmonious and balanced.

Ashram is also a place where we can live in the presence of guru, which gives new energy, new perception, new experience and new understanding. Guru's example is perhaps the best teacher. It is a practical teaching that shows another way is possible and worth striving for, no matter how long it may take. Through his every action, Swamiji shows us the meaning of appropriateness and perfection. Whatever the situation, he always shows us something by his example: whether it is how to be present, how to laugh in life, how to discriminate and use common sense, how to be natural, pure, and connected with truth, or how a true disciple is filled with focus, dedication and selflessness which govern every thought, word, and deed. He always acts with clarity, purpose and conviction, and is always positive and always helps others. Most of all, he is always giving. Like Swami Satyananda and Swami Sivananda, Swamiji gives everything he can to help

others and further his guru's mission of relieving suffering and spreading peace, plenty and prosperity.

The inspiration and guidance of guru is transforming my life. Swamiji's guidance is promoting and aiding the step by step discovery of my purpose and direction. Before Swamiji entered my life, though on the surface I had everything anyone could want, life seemed more and more futile and I was filled with a sense of frustration at not being able to find my true path in life. Over the course of time, through the practices of yoga, ashram life and influence of guru, I am learning how to be more balanced and at peace with myself. I am gradually discovering my nature and role in life, and am moving towards becoming a constructive participant in the yajna of life. I am learning how to engage in life in a fuller and freer way, and realizing step by step both how to be and how to become. I have a long, long way to go in this journey, but now I know that while sometimes I will stumble and fall, I can pick myself up and keep on walking.



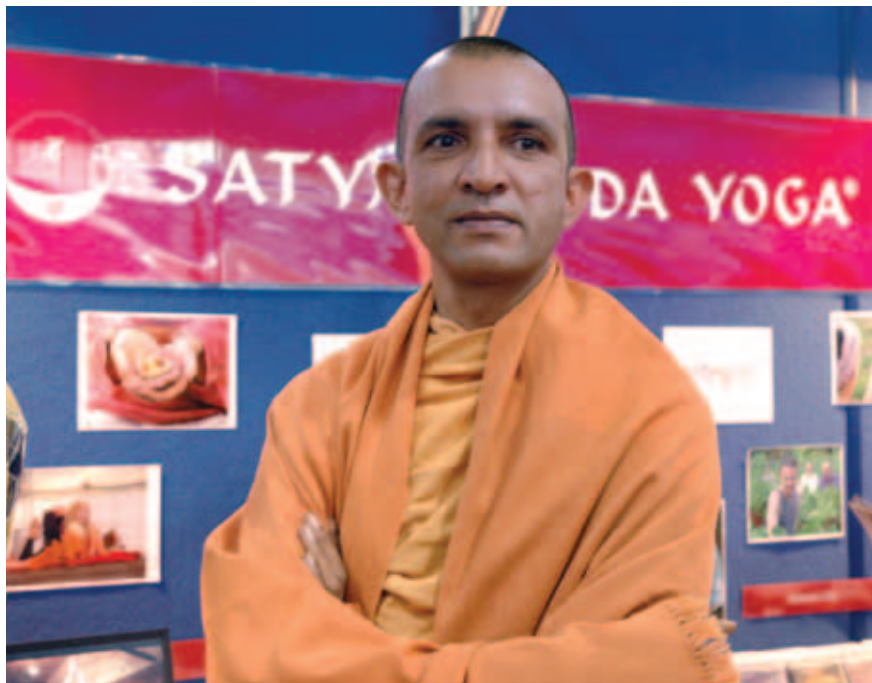
All the benefits I experience and see in myself, I also see in those around me as they bloom and realize their inner potential. Guru spreads light all over the world, transforming the lives of countless thousands upon thousands, who all have stories of inspiration and renewed hope and direction in life. Guru shows us how to live in a better way.

Guru's grace and efforts are limitless and beyond our perception. With universal vision and universal care, they see clearly the needs of people today and in the future. They give everything they can to help others and to fulfil their own guru's mission. They provide us with all the necessary tools to alleviate

"Yes, they give us the tools, they show the path, but we have to do the practices sincerely and regularly, and we have to walk the path and keep on going as and when we can. Swamiji often tells us that we should develop the ability to see the guru as an inspiration and not just someone on whom we dump all our problems. Once, at a satsang, Swamiji said to us, 'The qualities of discipleship are more important than instructions of the guru. It is not important to find the aim of your life or seek solutions to problems from the guru. That is secondary. What is important is that you cultivate the qualities of discipleship. If one is a true disciple, then the guru's guidance is received every step of the

"But what does one do with the intellectual and emotional baggage one invariably comes with?" asked my friend, somewhat perplexed.

"Well, most of us find that as we live under the guidance of the guru, the contents of those bags drop one by one. Sometimes it happens in a flash, sometimes there is intense inner resistance, sometimes there is easy chiselling away. There is a trick I use to get the better of the situations when I begin to make too much of myself: I remind myself of the story Swamiji likes to tell about Jonathan Livingston Seagull."



suffering and promote evolution and well-being, and they sow the seeds of change for future generations, ensuring that all have the best possible opportunity to live well."

"It is so moving the way the gurus can transform people's lives," remarked my companion, no longer a neophyte in the spiritual traditions.

way. At times it is received physically, at times mentally, on the psychic plane, or just in words that one hears in meditation. However, if such awareness, level of acceptance and surrender are not there, and the relationship with guru is intellectual and satisfaction-oriented, then it is better that you find your own solutions."

"Yes, I know that one!" gushed my companion excitedly. "I gave that book as a gift to Swamiji once with the seagull's classic words as an inscription, 'Teach me how to fly like that.' And he laughed and said, 'The book has the reply. Start from the basics.'"

"Would you like to see what he said in a satsang on that?" I said.

Become Jonathan

"In the book Jonathan Livingston Seagull, Jonathan is a young seagull who wants to learn to fly better. Desperately, he tries to fly faster every day. One day he meets an older seagull who becomes his guru. During the training, Jonathan says 'But I have already done so much. I can fly faster than all other seagulls.' The guru seagull says, 'You might have known many things in the past, but you have to now start from the basics.' The training goes on until Jonathan becomes a master and develops the ability to fly faster than the mind. The guru seagull departs and Jonathan becomes the teacher. And when young aspiring seagulls come to him to learn to fly, he says to them, 'Begin with the basics!'"

That story depicts what an ashram is. It is not a place of realized and saintly people, but of ordinary people who are trying to achieve and experience something better in life. Sri Swamiji always says that an ashram is not a place of entertainment; instead, it is a tool to evoke a different understanding of life, of participation in, life. An ashram is the 'training ground'; everyone here is a learner, and when our training is complete we move on.

The mind is laid bare in the ashram environment. We realize our mental level, struggles and aspirations. Everything is thrown into turmoil. The ashram becomes the catalyst to make us confront ourselves and relearn everything. Therefore, when you come to an ashram, do not think that you are coming to a highly evolved place. It is a place of very ordinary people, the only difference is that they have an aspiration and they are trying. They are not perfect; mistakes are made, confusion dominates, problems have to be confronted and interpersonal conflicts have to be managed. However, if all this is done in the right frame of mind, the person who goes through it all becomes the winner.

The only force and role model of the ashram is the guru. Legally and socially the ashram is an organization. Individually and spiritually the ashram is just one person: the guru. The rest is only buildings. If the guru's energy leaves the place, you will not find anything there. But as long as the guru's energy is the focus of the place, it will seem to be heaven on earth.



Guru is the centre of the ashram. One has to tune one's mind to the frequency of the guru. After all, when you go to school or university to learn a subject, you have to empty the mind of all other subjects and focus on only one thing in a class. You have to be totally attentive to the teacher. Therefore, your focus must be on one when you want to be educated. Similarly, an ashram without guru has no meaning.

The interaction and relationship between guru and disciple in the ashram has to be free and open. But there must also be dignity and respect in this freedom and openness. One does not simply do whatever one wishes to, but opens oneself to understanding the learning that is underway. And it is very difficult! It is easy to visualize the relationship between teacher and student and to superimpose that relationship on guru and disciple, but it is impossible to understand the mechanism of interaction between guru and disciple. And perhaps that is not needed for all. Not everyone needs to become a disciple.



The only thing that can help us in this journey is clarity of mind and purity of heart. That is what one attains from the ashram in the course of time. When guru becomes the centre of attraction and the people surrounding him are in tune with his mission, vision and actions, then learning in the real sense begins. Till then, there is no real learning.

I have had many setbacks in my spiritual life. I am aware of them today. I have been wrong so many times in my life and I did not realize it at that time. Therefore I say that discipleship is not everyone's need, because it is not easy to become a disciple. The only need is to be free and open with dignity and respect. If you can truly live that, then who knows, you may become greater than the greatest disciple!"

Swami Kriyatma, who is one of the pillars of the Mangrove Mountain ashram in Australia, received some special lessons in becoming Jonathan. He has learnt to look upon himself with an amused grin with the help of the mirror called Swami Niranjana.

Darshan

"Living here at Mangrove I get to see Swamiji that often, typically less than once a year. In between it is rare that I write to him or speak to him. Some would say that is not much contact or connection, but for me it is ample.

It's not that I'm having psychic dialogue with him during meditation or receiving directives from him in dreamtime, because I don't. Which by the way I consider to be very good news as from my perspective I have enough trouble completing the tasks I receive from him in my waking life without any other worldly inputs for my 'to do' list.

Yes, you could say my relationship with Swamiji is distant in the geographic sense. And even when he is here, there can be times when there is no eye contact, no recognition and no direct dialogue. I must confess that sometimes I consider that to be a good year! Why? Because there are other years when

the eye contact is so penetrating I burn, when the requests are so challenging that I feel it will take lifetimes to fulfil what is asked of me. I can be haunted by what I should have done, but haven't. Ironically there are other times when I, through some circumstance, am flattered with attention to the point where I feel bathed in gold. Typically in these situations my response is so inane and his response so incisive that I vow to go on mouna for several yugas. In all cases though, this for me is darshan.

I remember one year in particular when Swamiji was coming to Mangrove Mountain for a gathering. By the time he arrived, of course, I was exhausted already from the planning and preparation that precedes such visits. Prior to arrival Swamiji had asked whether there was a particular subject we would like him to focus on in his public talks. The topic I asked him to address was Vedanta.

Upon arrival of course he revolutionized the timetable we had put in place, no surprises there. Part of the reshuffle included

setting up a time for our teachers from the community to have dedicated time with him. We quickly gathered some questions on paper for Swamiji to respond to. This he did with his usual grace, clarity and insightfulness. I was nominated to read the questions out. Apart from reading out the questions, I was reflecting on his responses, and my internal dialogue was one of feeling pretty smart sitting up there and outwardly was no doubt nodding wisely in agreement. Upon reflection I think I shouldn't have nodded so wisely as when the next question was asked, Swamiji asked me to respond and of course I had no idea of the appropriate answer but nevertheless did offer some ridiculous opinion, which needless to say totally missed the point and was dismissed with the disdain it deserved. Having taken this opportunity to make it perfectly clear to Swamiji and my peers just how little I knew, the gathering concluded with a cup of tea. I sheepishly stayed in the background for as long as I could while planning my low-profile departure. Just nano seconds before





I escaped Swamiji sent a message that he would like to speak with me. Adopting my lowest profile, I went to him.

‘Kriyatma, I want you to introduce the public talks and give an overview of the subjects we are going to address.’

‘But, Swamiji, I don’t know anything about this topic.’

‘Yes, Kriyatma, you have made that perfectly clear already, but nevertheless I want you to do this.’

Although I was now sort of accustomed to flaunting my imperfections publicly, I hadn’t had the opportunity to do so in front of four or five hundred people before. Yes I was excited, but I can’t say that it was in a good way.

So, after a sleepless night reading up on the said topic and at a deep cellular level realizing that I now knew even less than before which mortifyingly meant I couldn’t even construct one salient sentence on the subject, I waited for the start of the program with less than zero enthusiasm. Compounding my dread was a healthy dose of industrial strength narcissism, not sleeping the night before and being already tired, I was far from a shining example of the benefits

of the yogic lifestyle. Looking grey with bags under my eyes, a nervous twitch starting to develop in my left eye, first signs of a cold sore and blocked sinus, I would no doubt make a splendid contrast with the prana-flooded aura surrounding Swamiji. As it happens he didn’t ask me up to speak or introduce the program . . .

Two more sessions passed without being asked up and at last I started to relax, but not so much as to say I was complacent. I sat camouflaged in geru amongst a sea of geru well towards the back behind a pylon or some visual obstruction and closed my eyes for entire sessions at a time. The next session began with kirtan and I took my customary incognito position in the room, eyes closed, I joined in the chant, time passed slowly until I felt a tap on the shoulder and there was Shankardev bending over me saying that Swamiji wanted me up on stage. I looked up to see Swamiji watching the unfolding of this interaction from the stage with the happiest smile you could imagine. My non-verbals were unquestionably memorable.

After the kirtan and up on stage, Swamiji turned to me with that amazing smile and said, ‘And now Kriyatma will define Vedanta.’ As I had predicted, my talk was pathetic, fortunately, I



only mumbled around six words so this aspect of my humiliation, though intense, was brief to say the least. It was good to have established a new benchmark for myself on just how embarrassed I could actually be without passing out.

So at this stage while totally mortified by my ineptitude, at least I felt it was over. The final session arrives and I am squirreled back safely behind the pylon and wouldn’t you know it: tap tap, same scenario, and back up on stage, no time to contemplate new benchmarks because Swamiji has launched into the most magnificent satsang I can recall ever being present at, the words the sentiments the humour the wisdom, the prem just flowing moment by moment and being in such proximity was for me nothing short of anandam. On conclusion he asks me to summarize the program. The muses are with me this day and on completion he briefly turns my way and gives the slightest nod and smile of approval. If this is not darshan, what is?

This is not the end of the rollercoaster ride of that time with Swamiji here, there is more, but you get the idea. What stuns me is that this is just my story and there were another four or five hundred people with their story. How does he do that?”

The Kanyas and Batuks of Rikhia

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

When Swami Satyananda established himself in Rikhia, one of the poorest areas of India, in September 1989, his intention was not to have an ashram, but to live in isolation and perform higher sadhanas. During this time of intense spiritual practice, in December 1990 he heard the command: "Provide your neighbours with the same facilities and comforts that I have provided for you." Sivananda Math undertook to uplift the quality of life of the surrounding villagers. Sita Kalyanam became an annual event during which gifting of prasada to the rural people took place. In 1995, Sri Swamiji incorporated the Sat Chandi Yajna, worship of the Cosmic Mother, so people from every part of the world could experience the ancient spiritual culture. Yajna is an act of giving, a process

of sharing not only material wealth, but also spiritual wealth and prosperity. During the yajna period donations from all over the world are collected and used to uplift the poor and underprivileged.

Since then, a transformation has taken place in the Rikhia community. This is especially evident in the lives of the *kanyas* and *batuks*, girls and boys between the ages of seven and thirteen, whom Sri Swamiji has adopted. In 1995 when the first Sat Chandi Yajna was held, nine girls and one boy from the local area were provided with facilities for education and training in different skills, and they responded very well to such help. Children have a lot of potential, but very often that potential is not allowed to develop. These children are from a very poor, underprivileged and neglected section of society. When they were given this opportunity to develop aspirations, they became very creative, and more and more children came. The kanyas started coming to the ashram in bulk in 2000, and in 2004 the batuks were included. Now there are nearly 2,000

children, who know that despite their deprived backgrounds, they now have the opportunity to progress, develop and learn. Today they are self-confident and proud of themselves. They know they are cared for and no longer neglected.

Sri Swamiji has said that it will take four generations for a change to come about in society. The first generation is already set in its way of life. The parents of the kanyas and batuks were the first generation. They had their lives and professions; some were thieves, some rickshaw pullers, sweepers and farmers. However, their children have been given the opportunity to learn something more fulfilling. They have been given an opportunity rather than being denied everything in life.

The current generation of Rikhia children is into education, learning English, computer skills, Sanskrit, chanting and receiving positive cultural inputs. When they soak up this information and pass it on to the third generation, it will develop aspiration and ambition. They will be equipped with better understanding, knowledge and learning, and will be





able to dream: “This is what I want to become, this is what I want to do.” They will strive to fulfil their dreams. Some will migrate to Delhi, some to Kolkata, others to New York or London. Then, the fourth generation will be able to establish themselves in life. So, it will take about four generations for the entire process to come about.

The process has started. If in a short time the needs of the first generation are fulfilled, as they have been until now, emergence of the third and the fourth will not take long. These kanyas and batuks have reflected the stamina, drive, commitment, motivation and aspiration to excel in life, and their performance until now shows that they have excelled.

On the last day of the Sat Chandi Yajna, Kanya Pooja, worship of the kanyas, takes place. Kanyas are young girls, who have not yet reached puberty. It is a very ancient tradition in Shakta tantra. Until a girl attains puberty she is believed to be a manifestation of Devi, a link with Devi. Until the age of twelve, when sensual awareness has not yet dawned, the girls are known as *kanyas*. After the onset of puberty they are

known as *kishoris* until the age of sixteen. Then they become *yuvati* from sixteen onwards. The names reflect the different states of consciousness manifesting.

In 1995, at the first Rajasooya Yajna, nine kanyas, one boy and one married woman, a total of eleven, were worshipped. In the last Rajasooya Yajna, 1,111 kanyas and batuks were fed. The kanyas, wearing red, were fed and worshipped separately. There were 345 of them, four plus five equals nine, and three represents the trinity of Shakti: Saraswati, Lakshmi and Durga: peace, prosperity and transformation.

We find it so difficult to control the few children we have at home; imagine what might happen when there are 1,000 plus! However, even when they are getting up to mischief, the kanyas and batuks of Rikhia glow; innocence flows through them. All of these children have been born since Sri Swamiji settled in Rikhia. They have actually come into the world in his presence, so we call them Sri Swamiji’s children.

In 2003, the kanyas of Rikhia were the hosts of the yajna for the first time. Their transformation is a miracle of guru’s grace and God’s grace. The kanyas and batuks became the medium to channel the energy of Sri Swamiji during the yajna. There is synergy between the kanyas and batuks and Sri Swamiji. The shakti can be seen flowing from Sri Swamiji into them, transforming their attitudes and behaviour, responses and performance. You can feel that they have become the medium for the flow of shakti, each one like a small lightning rod, attracting the current to itself.

Transmission or transfer of shakti is not even felt or recognized by the recipient, yet the miracle of transformation begins to happen. If you put a seed with a hard shell into water, nothing will happen, but the day you plant it in the ground an invisible process begins which becomes the cause for the growth, development and nurturing of the seed into a plant, a shrub or a tree in the course of time. That invisible process which takes over the activities of life is known



as shaktipat. It is not something that can be understood through logic.

What we are witnessing is the samskara Sri Swamiji is giving them. The recognition, dignity and self-confidence they are cultivating will give them better samskaras. With those samskaras, in future their own children can become better. So it is not as if Sri Swamiji has picked them up to help them life long. After a few years, a new set of kanyas will come; as they reach the age of maturity they will go away, get married, go to another village and continue with their life, and a new group of young ones will be inducted to give them that confidence, that status.

Arrangements are underway to start a feeding program for the children of the local area. Now in Rikhia over 2,000 kanyas and batuks are looked after by Swami Satsangi and Sivananda Math. It is Sri Swamiji’s sankalpa to provide the children with one wholesome meal a day. So preparations are underway to feed 5,000 children on a daily basis, which is a massive project. One healthy generation means that future generations have a better chance of surviving in this ever-changing world. ॐ



January

From the 2nd to 8th, Srimad Bhagavata Saptah was conducted by Dr Akhilananda Shastri and Bhakti Kiran from Varanasi in the newly acquired Yoga Vidya plot adjoining the Ganga Darshan Gurukul complex.

From the 16th to 18th, Dr Swami Nirmalananda conducted a workshop organized by Satyananda Yoga Kendra, Indore, at the Ananadamayee Ashram, Indore.

On the 19th, Swami Niranjan was the chief guest at the inauguration of the Ashok Dham Shiva temple, which was dedicated by the Shankaracharya of Puri, HH Swami Nischalananda.

Swamiji was in Patna from 29th to 30th January. He gave satsang at Naga Thakur Bari, spoke to judicial officers, to SBI executives and addressed the inaugural function of APICON 2006, the 61st annual conference of the Association of Physicians of India. The chief guest was the Bihar Chief Minister, Sri Nitish Kumar. Other guests included the Bihar Health Minister, Sri Chandradeo Rai and ex-Vice Chancellor of MAHE University, Manipal,

Dr B.M. Hegde. Workshops were conducted by Dr Swami Nirmalananda and Swami Tyagraj.

February

On the 3rd, Basant Panchami, the foundation day of BSY was celebrated at Ganga Darshan with havan and chanting led by BYMM. Swami Niranjan and Swami Satsangi from Rikhiapeeth presided.

On the 4th, Swami Niranjan gave satsang to students from Notre Dame Academy, Munger.

On the 14th, Bal Yoga Diwas, Children's Yoga Day, was celebrated by BYMM in the new Yoga Vidya plot of Ganga Darshan Gurukul.

On the 19th, Swami Niranjan was guest of honour at the foundation day of Suryagarha YMM.

Swami Atmabhishek conducted a yoga camp at APS Centre, Kamptee, Nagpur, from the 2nd to 12th, and spoke to trainees at Nagpur Air Force station and at the office of the Chief Commissioner of Central Customs, Excise and Service Tax. From the 18th to 26th, he conducted a camp at the Satyananda Yoga Kendra, Muzaffarpur.

March

From the 2nd to 5th, Swami Niranjan presided over a Yoga Mahotsav in Mumbai at the Shahji Raje Bhosle stadium. Swamiji inaugurated Yoga Vidya Dham ashram at Talavadi, Nasik, and gave satsang and practical classes from the 7th to 9th.

From the 21st to 27th, members of Suryagarha YMM attended an ashram life program at Ganga Darshan.

On the 25th and 26th, Swami Niranjan gave satsang at



Chandisthan, Munger.

Swami Yogakanti was in Australia, where she conducted seminars in Canberra, Armidale, Newcastle and Manly.

April

Swami Niranjana was in Australia from the 14th to 21st for the Easter program at the Satyananda Yoga Academy, Mangrove Mountain. Swamiji also gave direction to the accredited and affiliated Satyananda Yoga teachers and met with the SRI research team.

From the 24th to 30th, Swami Anandakumar conducted a program at Atma Darshan Yogashram, Bangalore, and a residential retreat weekend.

A group of doctors, engineers and other professionals from Nasik visited Ganga Darshan from the 24th to 30th to experience

ashram life.

Swami Atmabhishek conducted two one-week yoga camps at Kendriya Vihar, Noida, UP. From 27th April to 5th May, he conducted a camp at Bacheli, South Bastar, NMDC Ltd. (Bailadila Iron Ore Project Deposit No. 5) and from the 15th to 22nd May at Jaynagar, Madhubani, Bihar.

May

At Gyan Darshan Yogashram, Bhilai, children conducted four ten-day shivirs from 1st May to 17th June.

On the 6th, Swami Niranjana gave satsang at a Yoga Sadhana Shivar held from the 4th to 7th May at Sangrampur, Bihar.

From the 11th to 18th, a group from Chennai visited Ganga Darshan for yoga and ashram life.

Swami Niranjana toured Europe in May and June. From the

19th to 21st, at the Venice Convention Centre, delegates from 33 countries attended the program. In Slovenia, from the 24th to 28th, Swamiji spoke at Cankarjev Dom in Ljubljana and at the Hotel Convent. In Lindau, Germany, delegates from 31 countries attended the program at the Satyam Sadhana Centre, Volkings, from 30th May to 1st June. Other speakers included Rishis Vivekananda and Hridayananda and Swamis Pragya-murti, Sivamurti and Anandananda.

Dr Swami Nirmalananda conducted a workshop in Mumbai from 30th May to 3rd June, a one-day retreat and a refresher session for yoga teachers, organized by Satyananda Yoga Centre, Mumbai.

Swami Yogakanti gave a seminar in Paris in May, and in Mill, Netherlands, in July.

June

Swami Niranjana was in Bokaro from the 16th to 18th for a Yoga Sadhana Shivar organized by Swami Gorakhnath. Swamiji gave practical classes and satsangs, addressed children and teachers, spoke to officers, executive directors and general managers from Bokaro Steel Plant at their Training and Development Centre, and at a seminar organized by the Rotary Club.

A Yoga Sadhana Shivar was held at Ganga Darshan from the 19th to 25th for Yoga Anusandhan Samsthan, Lucknow.

From the 19th to 25th, a group of children led by Ram Sundar Saha, president of Niranjana Yoga Kendra, Saharsa, and principal of Saraswati Bal Vidyalaya, Saharsa, were at Ganga Darshan to experience ashram life.

From the 22nd to 25th, Swamis Shankarananda, Kaivalyananda, Gyanbhikshu and Suryaprem gave practical classes and satsangs at a yoga shivar organized by Sanjiv Chaturvedi at the Netaji Sports Club, Jamalpur.

Swami Niranjana was in Raipur from 30th June to 2nd July for a yoga convention organized by Satyadarshan Yogashram, Raipur.

July

On the 3rd, Swami Niranjana gave satsang at Gyandarshan Yogashram, Bhilai.

From the 7th to 11th, Swami Niranjana presided over the Golden





Jubilee celebration of Satyananda Yoga at Satyananda Ashram, Rajnandgaon, where Swami Satyananda established IYFM in 1956. Swamiji conducted practical classes and satsangs. On the 11th, he conducted the Guru Poornima celebrations. On the 11th, at Rikhiapeeth, Swami Satyananda blessed the Guru Poornima celebrations with his darshan and satsang. In Munger, Guru Poornima was celebrated at Sivananda Ashram, Munger.

From the 21st to 25th, Swami Nirnanjan conducted a program in Kerdreolet, Brittany, France.

August

From the 3rd to 20th, a yoga sadhana and HMC was conducted at Ganga Darshan by Sannyasi Soumyashakti.

Regional directors and officers from the Sports Authority of India (SAI) attended a course at Ganga Darshan from the 12th to 17th.

At Gyan Darshan Yogashram, Bhilai, a yoga shivir was held from the 19th to 28th, and a program for children from the 3rd to 17th October.

From 31st August to 4th September, children from Suryagarha, Bihar, visited Ganga Darshan to experience ashram life and learn introductory yoga practices.

September

On the 7th, Swami Nirnanjan visited the Dashbhuji temple, Munger, and laid the foundation stone for the Dashbhuji Samskara Kendra.

From the 5th to 15th, an advanced Kriya Yoga course was conducted at Ganga Darshan by Swami Yogakanti for students from Bangalore, Mumbai and Chennai.

From the 8th to 12th, the annual program was celebrated at Ganga Darshan with havan, satsang by Swami Nirnanjan, meditation, bhajan and kirtan led by BYMM.

Swami Nirnanjan was in Satna, MP, from the 14th to 17th for a yoga seminar organized by Sivananda Darshan Yogashram. Swamiji also addressed doctors and staff of Aditya Birla Hospital, and gave guidance to school children. Practical classes were conducted by Swami Vigyanachaitanya.

From the 9th to 13th, children from Jamshedpur, led by Sannyasi Buddhmani, visited Ganga Darshan for ashram life and to learn introductory yoga practices.

From the 10th to 12th, Sanjeev Kumar brought aspirants from Nagpura, Chhattisgarh, to Ganga Darshan.

From the 18th to 20th, Swami Nirnanjan presided over a Yoga Satsang Festival at Katni, MP, organized by the Satyananda Yoga Kendra. He also addressed students from Diamond Higher Secondary School, Madhavnagar.

From the 18th to 22nd, Dr Swami Nirmalananda conducted a workshop in Walkeshwar, Mumbai, organized by Satyananda Yoga Centre, Mumbai.

October

From the 2nd to 6th October, administrative officers from SAI attended an introductory yoga course at Ganga Darshan conducted by Swami Vigyanachaitanya.

Swami Nirnanjan was in Ranchi from the 13th to 15th for the Jharkhand Yoga Mahotsav. He also addressed jawans and officers from 23 Infantry Division, Deepatoli, Ranchi; members of IICM, SAIL, Birla Agriculture University, the Ranchi judiciary and state administration; school students, and students and faculty members of the Birla Institute of Technology.



Satyananda Veda and Yoga Vigyan Samsthan, Bhilwara, Rajasthan, conducted yoga sessions for school students, and programs for corporate organizations.

November

The 11th Rajasooya Yajna was held at Rikhiapeeth from the 21st to 25th, including Sat Chandi Mahayajna and Sita Kalyanam. Swami Satyananda was present throughout. Led by the kanyas and batuks, the yajna invoked and celebrated Devi, the primordial feminine energy. The kanyas sang bhajans and kirtans while pandits from Varanasi chanted Durga Saptashati. Arati and guru poojan closed the program every evening. Swami Niranjana and Swami Satsangi presided throughout. Prasad was distributed to over 7,000 participants from 44 countries, all states of India and the surrounding



villages. The 950 kanyas and batuks received sets of clothing every day. Kanya poojan was held on the last day in the presence of Sri Swamiji.

Rikhiapeeth was born on the 25th during the Sat Chandi

Mahayajna, when Sri Swamiji proclaimed that in future Rikhiashram would be known as Rikhiapeeth. Swami Satyasangananda was appointed as peethadhishwari of Rikhiapeeth and given the mandate to implement Swami Sivananda's three cardinal teachings of 'serve, love and give.'

A Kriya Yoga and Tattwa Shuddhi Sadhana program was conducted at Rikhiapeeth from 29th November to 6th December by Swamis Satyadharma and Sumitrananda. Sri Swamiji gave satsang on the 6th, in which he said that a slow and steady approach to kriya practice wins the race. Swami Satsangi also guided students.

December

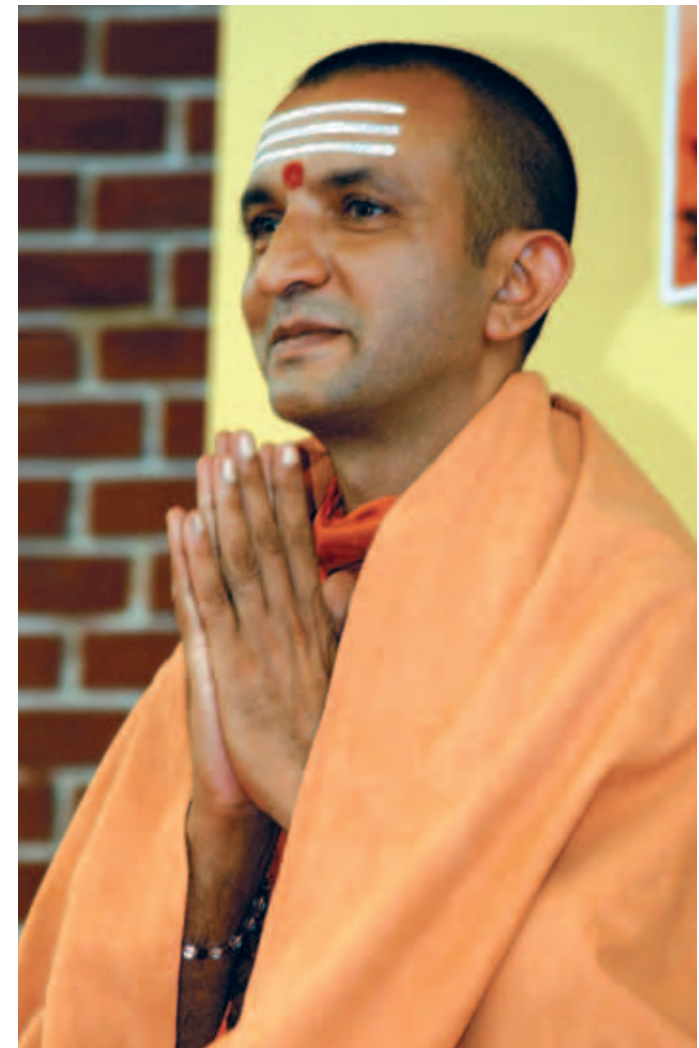
From the 3rd to 6th, Swami Shankarananda conducted a program at Ganga Darshan for managers from NABARD (National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development).

On the 5th, Yoga Poornima, Swami Satyananda's birthday, was celebrated at Ganga Darshan.

From the 10th to 26th, a program organized by SAI was held at Ganga Darshan for a group of boys excelling in sports at national and international levels, accompanied by their coaches.



At the beginning of this year, Ganga Darshan was buzzing in anticipation of the celebration of the Srimad Bhagavata Saptah. Held at the newly acquired Yoga Vidya plot adjoining the Ganga Darshan Gurukul complex, the program consisted of the narration of stories or kathas from the Srimad Bhagavata Purana. Dr Akhilananda Shastri and his daughter Bhakti Kiran from Varanasi narrated the text in the traditional story-telling style each morning and afternoon, along with beautiful bhajans and kirtan, and accompanied by a team of musicians. The crowd rose from 4,000 on the first day to over 25,000 in later days, with everyone listening intently to the stories and music. BYMM children helped to organize and manage the proceedings, including seating and crowd control.



Swamiji travelled to various cities of India this year. In Patna he spoke on 'Modern Lifestyle and Yoga' to a gathering of over 3,000 people. For judicial officers at their training academy, he dealt with 'Stress Management'. He also addressed the inaugural function of APICON 2006, the 61st annual conference of the Association of Physicians of India for 4,000 delegates from all over India where the chief guest was the Bihar Chief Minister, Nitish Kumar.

A month later he was in Mumbai and Nasik. The middle of the year saw him in Raipur where he highlighted the four stages of development in yoga and guided the participants through the 'yoga capsule' practices with which to move through these stages.

Guru Poornima this year was the occasion to celebrate the Golden Jubilee celebration of Satyananda Yoga at Satyananda Ashram, Rajnandgaon, where Swami Satyananda had established the International Yoga Fellowship Movement (IYFM) in 1956. A memorable part of this event was the nagar kirtan led by Swamiji, where thousands of people participated in a procession singing kirtan through the streets. Swamiji spoke on the development of

Satyananda Yoga over the past 50 years into a world movement and on Guru Poornima day, more than 15,000 devotees came to perform Guru Paduka poojan in a day filled with bhajans, kirtans and satsang.

In the second half of the year, in his travels across India, Swamiji addressed army personnel, executives, judiciary, administrators, school children and university students, as well as large gatherings of aspirants and devotees.

Back in Ganga Darshan, a new wave appeared to be strengthening. Swami Suryaprakash was shouldering much of the administrative duties. Many remarked that the third language of the ashram appeared to be Spanish with Swami Niranjan, Swami Kaivalyananda



and Swami Suryaprakash speaking it fluently, and many Spanish speaking students visiting from Europe and South America.

Swamis Aghorananda and Gangadhara speak Portuguese, but they are certainly making bridges that span the ocean. Let us hear their story.

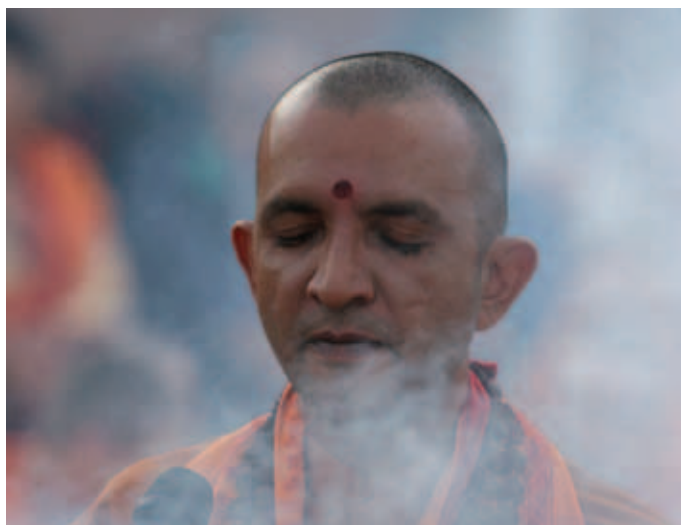
Brazil and Satyananda Yoga

"This story begins towards the end of 1995 when a romantic and idealistic Brazilian couple, after two years of planning and saving money, left their country, family, house and work and came to spend six months travelling in India. They were looking for close contact with the ancient Indian culture and its mythological expressions, looking for academic studies, deeper experience and inspiration to help them to continue teaching yoga in Brazil.

Like all first-time tourists in Mother India, they received great opportunities to feel, in body, mind and emotions a true reality far away from what we read about in books. They were in a great laboratory that keeps travellers in a state of no-mind because of the extreme contrast with the western lifestyle.

But they survived, and one day, shopping in Pondicherry, in southern India, they found a very special book called Kundalini Tantra. They were touched by the quality of the knowledge it





contained. One question arose, 'Please Sir, where is this Bihar School of Yoga?' He showed them the map posted on the shop wall. 'Here, on the extreme other side of India. Oh my God, it's much too far to go.'

But that night they changed all their travel plans and began the trip by bus, by train, and one month later, after crossing hundreds of obstacles with the help and courage received from Lord Ganesha, they arrived in front of a big and beautiful gate in the middle of the strangest city that they had seen in India. The gate man said, 'Who are you?'

'Two Brazilians.'

'What do you want?'

'We don't know, but we came to know.'

'Did you send a letter beforehand asking permission to come?'

'No – is it necessary?'

Pause – 'OK, I'll check.' Some time later the big gates opened and for two Brazilians, a new life began.

Inside the walls we saw very different people, beautiful western women without hair, men wearing skirts, people all in orange, all in white, all in yellow. Then, with a face from another

planet, a totally different man, tall and slim, just walking with a dog, and surrounded by a lot of people. 'He is Swami Niranjana,' we were told.

We were very well received – a good room, hot sun on the balcony, good food, free to rest and read books in the gardens. Sometimes we were asked to do a little work in the kitchen or garden but nothing too much – but all around people were running from one side to the other without stopping, without speaking, without smiling, with intense and concentrated facial expressions. We were sent a teacher, a lady with a peaceful face, blue eyes and a wonderful singing voice who gave knowledge about psychic and subtle purifications and the arousal of energy.

Then there were some meetings with that tall thin man with the dog that was anxious to bite. The overwhelming impression was of balance and clarity of mind and that we had found an eternal friend-brother.

In fact, the harmonious combination of the opposite qualities of subtlety with force and delicacy with strictness is one of Swamiji's innate characteristics. After our first contact in the gardens at Munger, while we were trying to attune our past with yoga, we immediately perceived a great freedom in him. He looked at us as if he already knew what was about to happen, but by maintaining silence, he allowed us to live the experience.



I remember the occasion of our second departure, with tears swelling in our eyes, because of such a special encounter and just then we discovered it was only two days to his birthday and how he loved to watch shows and dances from all parts of the world. We readily offered to put on a display of asanas, music, mudras and a slide show together with ritualistic elements representing the battle fought by goddess Durga against Mahishasura, the demon. Swamiji consented enthusiastically. So what was to be a

but we continued just the same. When we finished our presentation we had only one yearning, which was to prostrate ourselves at Swamiji's feet. However, to our surprise, Swamiji had liked our performance so much that he requested we stay on for another day so that our show could be filmed.

The stage at Munger now was more like a film studio. The swamis arrived with costumes, makeup, cameras, lights and action, and a new slide projector as well to film what Swamiji, in his visionary manner, had called the temple of the future.



farewell immediately changed into a flurry of activity and expectations to get everything ready for the day. When we got up on stage, in the Main Building's 2nd floor, we were guileless and driven by the desire to express the dynamism of the show, but we were taken unawares by technical and structural disarrangements.

The slide projector failed us exactly when needed, but we continued just the same. Our western clothes were inappropriate,

His capability to awaken dormant expressions within our personalities and to aggrandize new elements is so great that, with this gesture, he gave us the inspiration needed to light the fire of yoga in our hearts. It is not by chance that Brazil now has a Satyananda Yoga Center.

And so, we left Munger on the following day with the hope and certainty that we would return. It was his birthday, but the present was for us."

Swami Dharmadeva used to be a barrister involved in fighting for the environment. He has a flair for the dramatic and sings from the heart, and after being the godman of GDO (Ganga Darshan Office) for many years, is mellowing out, back in his native Colombia.

The unfolding vision

"Swami Niranjan was sitting in the same folding chair he sits in today. He was relaxed and poised, reading his daily mail while I was trembling and hiding in a corner. I had arrived from Colombia just the day before to attend the sannyasa course in English medium, but apart from a few pictures of a skinny tall boy in the wallet of a Colombian lady, I had not seen him before.

The small verandah outside the kutir was teeming with the morning activities of starting the day in the ashram: the rattle of keys (the holy keys), the sweeping and the mopping and the apparently purposeful rushing about of the swamis, the sun creating shadows and the flowers displaying dew drops on their petals.

The first meeting with the guru is a mysterious personal affair. Of course it changed my life, but that is a long story. Instead, let me ask you a few questions that after 15 years are still haunting my mind – how can a guru, with a single glance – put the whole of your life and your destiny together? Or maybe you can answer how a heart can expand beyond its actual limits without bursting?

Excuse me beforehand if you notice my raw ego jumping between sentences. I have been witnessing the process for more than 15 years but am still far from perfecting sakshi bhava, the cool impartial witness. Still, I would like to speak about the unfolding of history, the unfolding vision of the masters, and the spread of yoga.

When Swami Satyananda renounced again in 1988 and set out on a new path as a sannyasin, Swami Niranjan, his chosen successor, was a young man of 28 and he may have felt the need to train his own sannyasins to help him fulfil the mission, the huge and amazing vision that Swami Sivananda and Sri Swamiji had set on his shoulders, of furthering the propagation of yoga. The end of

the century was already in the air, but in 1991 the good old Indian snail mail was still thriving and invitations had carried a cautionary advice for the Indian National Sannyasa Course, that only those males and females of strong physical, mental and emotional character who could face challenges and difficulties with faith and positivity all throughout need apply. Many still came, and a whole new chapter was landmarked by that sannyasa course.

So when the second batch arrived in 1992 for the sannyasa training of non-Indian nationals, we found in the grounds of

is a massive concrete construction of impeccable lines and well-thought architecture and it looks to the Ganges – hence the name Ganga Darshan. The very modern building looked surreal against the rural surroundings of fields tilled by oxen and humble mud hut houses on the outskirts of Munger. A sort of citadel, with other buildings of simple, down to earth architecture set downhill. The gardens are magnificent, manicured to the geometric perfection of a yantra or mandala and tended with dedication. The main tree is the ashoka, a wonderful and elegant evergreen, straight and

course, there were very few hired workers, so we did all the work from menial labour to editing, typing away as the age of computers was still remote in Munger. Revisiting those years I can realize how lucky we were then. We were about 100 males, females and ardhanareshwaras from all over the world. Swamiji would sit in the gardens for a daily lunch/satsang – a bit of rice followed by a bit of wisdom with sometimes a short deep satsang for dessert. A very nutritious diet indeed. During the karma yoga in the gardens you could often see Swamiji



Ganga Darshan a solid, brand-new crew of definitely strong emotional character guiding us through the 'challenges and difficulties' of seclusion. And for me, believe me, it took some guts and time just to ease the cravings for chocolate and coffee and phones and friends.

'So this is Ganga Darshan,' we thought in those first days. Just like a mediaeval fortress, Ganga Darshan was built in the mid '80s on the top of a hill. The Main Building, the navel of the campus,

thin like the spine of a yogi. The whole boundary wall is adorned with ashokas planted at the same millimetric distance from each other – so for the eagles that nest on the roof of the 7th floor of Main Building the boundaries are surely a secret Morse code of dots and lines that spell the word 'order'. Nothing is cleaner or neater than Ganga Darshan campus.

So it was in these surroundings that we began our training. The ashram was closed for visitors and guests during the



weeding the lawn at the same time as he weeded somebody's mind, doing both tasks with skill and care.

Soon, Swamiji had a good number of hand-made, half-baked sannyasins to help run the place. But while we think in terms of next week, the masters have their minds in the next century or perhaps the next yuga. By 1995, Swami Satyananda had started the Sita Kalyanam programs in Rikhia and Swami Niranjana was preparing to materialize the long awaited

dream of a yoga university – the vision of Swami Sivananda and Sri Swamiji.

Did you know that ‘university’ and ‘yoga’ are synonymous? ‘Universitas’ in Latin means ‘the whole’ and comes from ‘universus’: ‘uni’ one and ‘versus’ turned. Doesn’t it sound familiar? In the normal western universities, the ‘one’ is always something ‘out there’ – things are geared towards (versus) external knowledge. In the Yoga University you first see your self, in which all is contained and then you see the whole one. And having this in mind, Swami Niranjan founded BYB, an institution for advanced studies in yogic sciences. Because it is one thing to declare ‘Know thyself,’ but another altogether to offer the skilful tools for the endeavour.

BYB was successful, but of course changed the place. The Ganga Darshan environment shifted from retreat mode to high school hype, but slowly, over a few years, wise moves were made and Swamiji brought the place back to centre and a very harmonious gurukul came into existence with the joy of youth and the mutual disciplines of yoga. BYB has not stopped, on the contrary the buildings for an independent campus are taller day by day and soon there will be students learning their yogic lore in the new library and rolling their chapattis in the new kitchen. Unfolding the vision has entered the fast track.

And the light has gone far. Swami Satyananda first went to South America in the seventies. Swami Niranjan and Swami Kaivalyananda have both lived there for several years, teaching and establishing yoga centres. The seeds sown at that time have not only sprouted, they have become trees with branches everywhere, ripe, generous fruits and deep roots. Colombia was the first to take root but nowadays Satyananda Yoga is established and growing in Uruguay, Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Venezuela. The Yogic Studies Courses, both levels I and II are conducted in Colombia every year in Spanish medium and there is a long waiting list of candidates. These courses are real transformation machines, the perfect blend of home practice, theory and yogic lifestyle to give a perceptible push to human evolution. I have witnessed the process with my mouth ajar and

feel a debt of deep gratitude to the masters who saw that human beings can and must be inspired to shine in their full splendour.”

Two more Colombians express what it has been like to know Swami Niranjan. We give you Ignacio Copete and María Teresa Valencia de Copete.

My friend the sage

“This story befittingly begins in Colombia, the land of ‘magic realism’ described by Garcia-Marquez in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. It all began one afternoon in late 1972 when I saw deplane in Bogota a young 12 year-old boy with a charming smile, a Beatle-like hair cut and a school backpack; his name was



Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati. At that moment, I became the fortunate witness of the extraordinary unfoldment of a modern-day sage, what in India, since time immemorial, has been called a rishi. I knew then that he was the appointed successor of my guru Swami Satyananda, but that was not an obstacle to forge a deep relationship, which allows me to consider him my close friend. Our relationship has been rich and colourful. We wrestled (I won because I was bigger and older), I harshly scolded him then, he now lovingly scolds me. I watched him, like an older brother, become a teenager, amazingly responsible but still a teenager. Then, at a speed that boggles the mind, under the direct guidance of Sri Swamiji, he became a wise guide to many and the visionary administrator of a world institution. I, the ‘knowledgeable’ young man of 1972 now sit in front of him to ask for his wisdom and advice.

For the western mind, it is not easy to understand how such knowledge and wisdom manifest so rapidly and naturally, thus making a person in his early twenties the perfect embodiment of a sage, of a yogi, of a rishi. The explanation can only be that he was born with such qualities and that yogis have ways to transmit knowledge and wisdom by methods not readily accessible to ordinary people. This fits perfectly in the world of ‘magic realism’ in which we Colombians so often live.

However, since friendship has to be tested, I have watched him closely, and to my happiness, I have found only the best of qualities in him. For me it is an inspiration and an example to see the compassion and love that Swamiji has for other human beings. He understands their needs and gently guides them, if they want his guidance. I have seen him rebuke someone and still that person come out smiling. Such is the loving energy he pours into others. But his gentleness is not a sign of weakness. If you are perceptive, you can feel the immense internal power he has, as well as the clarity of his role in this world. That clarity, together with one of the greatest capacities for work that I have seen, is what makes him such an outstanding head of institutions, as he demonstrated it, for more than a quarter of a century, in the Presidency of Bihar School of Yoga.

As a teacher, he is my envy. He is not only versed in the ancient yogic and tantric texts, but he is also up-to-date in all the knowledge of our modern world. Recently I played a game (and a test) with him on one of his lecture tours in Europe. I decided that I would see if pretending to be a newcomer to yoga, one of his public lectures would entice me to start practising it, as it had happened when I first heard Sri Swamiji. I mustered all my formal training as a lawyer and with pen and paper, I sat to hear and dissect the lecture. The lecture lasted one hour and twenty minutes, but halfway through I was so captured by what Swamiji was saying that I had to make an extra effort to continue with my critical analysis. At the end, I told him that if I had heard about yoga for the first time in that lecture I would have started its practice. And mind you, the comparison with Sri Swamiji is a tough one.

However, the most admirable quality of Swamiji Niranjan is that he is the embodiment of the perfect disciple. Always keen to perceive and follow his guru's instructions and, more important, to carry the burden of his mission of spreading yoga from shore to shore. Very often, I clearly see my guru, Swami Satyananda, in him.

Many times, I have wondered the reason for deserving to be closely associated with such a great individual, but I have come to accept it as a gift given to me at birth. I am very grateful for that."

An extraordinary human being

"When I was asked to write about Swami Niranjan, tears came to my eyes, not only for the love that I feel for him, but also thinking of the many years that have passed since I saw him for the first time and the many experiences that we have shared over more than 35 years.

I met Swami Niranjan in 1972 at the airport in Bogota, when he came to Colombia for the first time. He was just twelve, a schoolboy arriving from Europe with a backpack and long hair. I had already been told that the boy I was meeting at the airport was going to be Swami Satyananda's successor. This was hard to imagine at the time, given Swami Niranjan's young age and his playful and joyful behaviour.



Immediately upon arrival, Swami Niranjan started showing traces of a very mature young man, unlike other boys his age. At the same time, he never forgot his good sense of humour or the mischievousness typical of his age. At the Bogota ashram he gave yoga classes daily and I particularly remember the ones he taught at six in the morning, almost every day for several years. Sometimes during yoga nidra he would doze off a little, which was a reminder of his young age and the big responsibility he had on his shoulders.

Swami Niranjan has always been an avid reader, particularly of adventure books, and liked to stay informed on everything that was happening around the world. As the years went by he started maturing very rapidly. He would embark on projects that a boy his age would have never undertaken, such as an investigation of the ancient Pre-Colombian cultures. This was a topic that interested Swami Niranjan very much. He also started lecturing on yoga lifestyle and yogic philosophy, which for his age and background was quite extraordinary. It was really inspiring to see a young boy with such wisdom,

organizational skills and practical intelligence, all put to work for his guru's mission.

His stay in Colombia is well remembered by all people that he came in contact with. I personally was very close to him while he lived in Bogota. In 1973 I had the opportunity to accompany him with four other people on a road trip across most of Colombia. We would stop in any town that we entered and gave a talk on yoga in every school, university or home where they would welcome us. Since those days Swami Niranjan exhibited extraordinary dedication to his guru's mission as he was fulfilling the mandate of spreading yoga from door to door and from shore to shore.

Swami Niranjan was not only a young guru then, he was also a brother and a friend. He changed my children's diapers; he gave them their bottles and he babysat for them while I was doing the administrative work for the ashram. In later years he became not only my children's guru, but also a close friend with whom they share a common interest for computer games. He has been a continuous source of inspiration and guidance in their spiritual journey.

In 1975, at the tender age of 15, Swami Niranjana helped us organize a World Yoga Convention in Bogota. It was clear by then that he was an extraordinary person, possessing leadership skills and a great insight, not only in practical matters, but also in spiritual matters.

When in 1976, following his guru's instructions, he left Colombia to explore other shores and continue the mission elsewhere, we kept in constant contact. Whenever possible we travelled to meet with him, wherever he was stationed to continue teaching yoga.

Over the years I have seen Swami Niranjana's transformation and I have been a witness to his uninterrupted and unwavering dedication to fulfilling his guru's mission.

Of the numerous experiences that I have had with him, there are two that immediately come to mind for their relevance to my day-to-day life.

One day, while standing with Swami Niranjana on the terrace of the sixth floor at Ganga Darshan while observing the sannyasa course students perform their garden karma yoga, he turned to me and said, 'You know, María Teresa, everybody is always



trying their best.' That forever changed the way I see people and the way I interact with them. It gave me a glimpse of the compassion that he feels for the human race and inspired me to strive to develop such compassion. Whenever I find myself criticizing or condemning someone for their actions, I remember what he said and try to change my mental attitude towards them.

On another occasion, while working with him on a specific project where things did not happen as planned, he calmly said: 'Look, my dear, if it has to happen, it will happen.' Since that day, I rest assured that one can only be responsible for working to the best of one's abilities, but the result is often out of our control, no matter how hard we try.

I think of Swami Niranjana every day, realizing how difficult his life must be, not only having to fulfil people's expectations, but having to guide us all in matters of practical and spiritual life. It takes a man of his stature, physical and spiritual, to be able to fill his guru's shoes with such wisdom and grace."

In 2006, it was evident that Swamiji was becoming freer from institutional duties, his pastime, now that he had more trained sannyasins to run the work of BSY and its associated organizations. He was travelling around India and the world in response to the needs of systematic teaching, initiating new areas of development and nurturing the different institutions and organizations that were working here and there. In Mangrove Mountain, Australia, he had been giving teachings on an almost annual basis. This year he initiated



the sadhana of chanting three mantras first thing in the morning to the more experienced students there. This is the sadhana which he had first given to the poorest of the poor in Munger.

He also toured Europe extensively this year. The first program was held in Venice on the enchanting island of Lido. On the beach, which forms a gateway between East and West, vedic mantras were chanted for the first time in recorded history, as Swamiji conducted havan for the welfare of all. The yoga practitioners in Europe, being from more diverse cultures, have not had so much exposure to mantras as the Australian community. So Swamiji only gave the first stage of the mantra chanting there: Mahamrityunjaya and Gayatri, but he deepened his explanation of the practice.

At the elegant Venice Convention Centre, a gathering of over 1,000 delegates from 33 countries also heard Swami Niranjan speak on the theme of 'Living Yoga'. He again explained four main stages of development: (i) yoga practice, (ii) yoga sadhana, (iii) yoga lifestyle, and (iv) yogic culture. He also gave detailed guidance on the Yoga Capsules so that even people working in busy cities could start integrating their yoga throughout the day. In each place around the world, more was given.

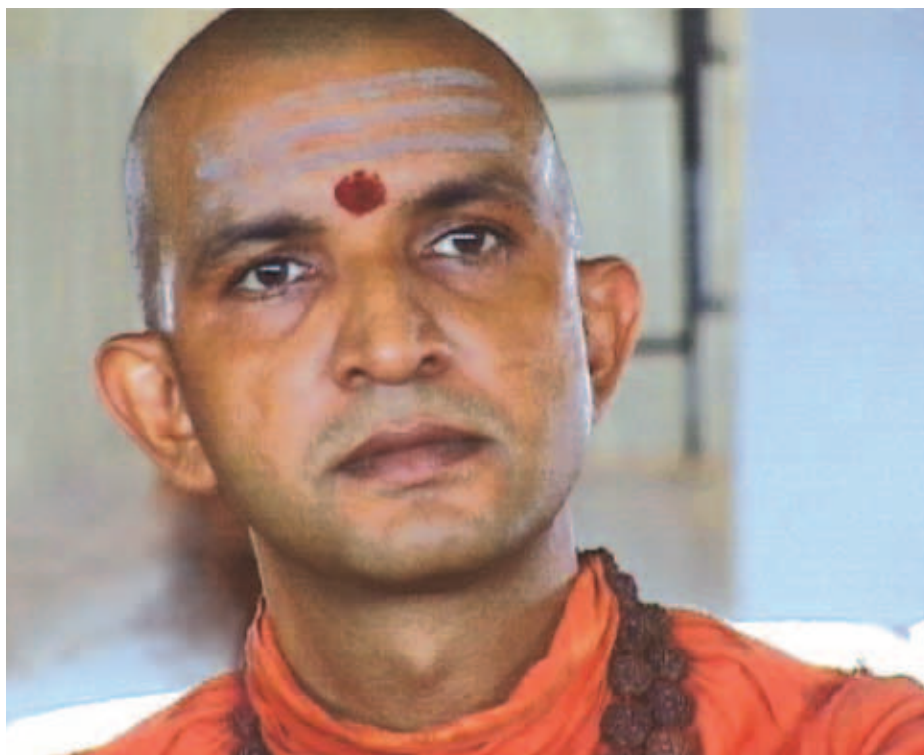
Swamiji was in Slovenia a week later. On the 24th, he spoke to over 700 people at Cankarjev Dom in Ljubljana on the identity crisis he sensed in Slovenia at a personal and national level and how yoga can help one to witness and manage the mind with integrity and express the creative potential. It was especially

dramatic as outside the lecture hall police in riot gear manned barricades as students threw stones and taunts. The roads were impassable for vehicles, forcing all the 700 to walk the wet streets at some personal risk to find an entrance that still opened into the stately venue. The gathering was mesmerized by Swamiji's immediate response and understanding of the situation that the people of Slovenia were experiencing spiritually and externally. He radiated serenity. While here, he also signed a bilateral agreement with the Sports Faculty of Ljubljana University, for yoga training in Slovenia.

The peaceful country venue for the weekend was the Hotel Convent, previously a Benedictine monastery, in the town of Ankaran on the Adriatic coast. About 550 delegates from 26 countries and the dedicated team of karma yogis organized by Swamis Vishwashakti and Omkarmurti welcomed Swamiji with kirtan and a rain of alpine spring flowers.

The next day he decided to teach all the classes himself: mantras, asana, pranayama, yoga nidra and meditation. Making sure that everyone knew exactly how to use the Yoga Capsules which he now outlined in detail: before getting out of bed in the morning, the mantras. Then 15 minutes of asana and pranayama,





if not before work, then definitely as you can manage during the day. In the afternoon or on returning home a five or ten minute 'capsule' yoga nidra. At night the positive review of the day and mantra japa.

Divyashakti (Colleen Faulconbridge) attended the convention in Venice and can relate the impact of the experience.

Bolt from heaven

"It was not my first experience of meeting a spiritual guru. I met the Dalai Lama when he was in South Africa about two years ago, but nothing prepared me for the meeting with Swami Niranjana. I was accompanying Sannyasi Kamalavidya and others from the South African School of Yoga to the International Yoga Congress in Venice, Italy, in May of 2006.

I arrived a very hot, tired and sticky person in Venice on the Thursday and after a reviving lunch the Italian way, we ventured

off to the congress venue to see what was happening and if we could register. We were met by Swami Anandananda, who told us to return at about 5:30 pm as Swami Niranjana was coming to the conference hall for a quick session. We were there at 5:30, went into the conference hall and listened to Swami Niranjana deliver a speech directed at the assistants of the congress and, as Swamiji light-heartedly put it, 'a practice run' for the actual conference. It began with a kirtan session that was quite special as the energy was immediately charged. I watched as the assistants were given the outfits they were required to wear for the duration of the conference and it was very uplifting to see the sense of unity in the moment. After the speech, we closed with the traditional Aum and Shanti and returned to our hotel.

We were walking through the lobby when we saw Swami Niranjana and his entourage walking towards the lobby from the outside. As he entered he recognized Sannyasi Kamalavidya and

she was summoned over to him. We were all invited into this intimate circle of energy of Swamiji who greeted Kamalavidya warmly. He then reached out and greeted her husband and son. Sannyasi Kamalavidya then turned to introduce me and Swamiji turned his attention directly at me, and with a piercing gaze he looked me straight in the eyeballs and it felt like I had been shot with a 10,00,000-volt bolt of energy in the heart region.

I was amazed as I had always spoken with a certain amount of cynicism about the flash of lightning from the divine. That had never happened to me or anyone I had known. But it was real and it was a complete shock. I was completely stunned and felt a little breathless. I was very close to tears as the energy had really pierced me and was racing through my body. We went to the car and I truly felt as if I was floating, I was completely out of sorts and felt very wobbly on my feet, and the emotional turbulence that was coursing through my body was zigzagging around like a spitfire.

It was truly a divine spark that was shot into my body that day. Every time I closed my eyes I could see Swamiji and that night I could feel his presence very strongly as I was getting ready for sleep. I was very humbled by this unique experience and can assure you that I do wish it could happen to every person on this planet. It changed my perception of divine energy and for this I am grateful to have met Swamiji.

The conference spanned the next few days commencing with registration on the Friday morning and lunch. After lunch we were shepherded into the cinema theatre that was the location of the congress for the first speech from Swamiji. We commenced with kirtan again, and many sannyasis were dancing and motivating the crowd with their energy. It was a very moving experience as we all stood and joined in. Swamiji then entered regally and took his place on the podium. He is a very graceful and serene man, but misses nothing that is being played out before him. He

smiled benignly at his followers and his face glowed with a radiant light. He is always fully in control of both the crowd and his fellow speakers and when he motioned to the kirtan group to cease, the music faded and silence fell in the great cinema arena.

He opened the session with the traditional chanting and began his inauguration speech, and then went on to deliver his opening lecture 'Development of Life Potential through Yoga'. I was totally absorbed as he delivered a fairly complicated message in the form of analogies and anecdotes. The result was simple, clear and concise. Swamiji gave us all simple techniques to follow: chanting of the Mahamrityunjaya mantra followed by the Gayatri mantra 11 times each upon rising, for protection of the psyche.

Swamiji continued later that afternoon with another of his profound lectures and this was followed by all the delegates making their own way down to the beach for a fire ceremony

and chanting of Mahamrityunjaya mantra. The setting was idyllic, the sun setting over the Adriatic Sea and the energy of 400-500 orange clad chanters raising the energy on the beach. We attracted a lot of attention from holiday makers and it was a rather powerful experience feeling the energy of so many persons chanting mantra. This was followed by a very touching performance of a local opera singer who stood and offered his voice to Swamiji and the crowds. Prasad followed as the energy sated the crowd.

The highlight of the entire conference for me was the initiation ceremony which took place on the Sunday morning in the large gallery. Once everybody was in their correct position for their particular initiation. Swamiji took his position at the front, and the procedure began. Guiding us through the initial phases of the ceremony, he then ordered kirtan to commence. The rich sounds of our voices filled this spectacular gallery, a



dramatic marbled arcade that was richly furnished in yellow Venetian marble floors and walls, softened by vast drapes of yellow silk. As our voices resonated, the energy was palpable. Swamiji walked through the rows of initiates stopping before each person to bless their individual mala.

As Swamiji stood before me I was once again filled with the presence and the magnitude of this wonderful man, and was humbled to my very core. The sounds of our voices singing the holy kirtans vibrating and resonating around us, certainly added majesty to the ceremony. While Swamiji emanates a spectacular energy, he is the gentlest presence. And it is that essence of gentleness that wraps itself around you like a feather caressing your senses. That was my last impression of Swami Niranjan, and as I write this article I can recall the magnificence of the occasion and the humility of my state of mind. I am blessed to have been able to partake in this event and it will truly stay with me for a very long time."

In Lindau, Bavaria, bordering Lake Constance, for 350 delegates from 31 countries Swamiji's basic message remained unchanged – the challenge now is to establish

ourselves in yoga sadhana and yogic lifestyle. He also spoke on the nine-fold path of bhakti and highlighted the importance of satsang, the gathering of like-minded souls, as an important aspect as we move into yogic lifestyle. Again he taught morning class, yoga nidra and meditation classes of the new sadhana. The most moving thing was that, in May and June, everyone had expected summer weather and came with light clothing and tents. Instead, temperatures actually dropped below freezing with hail storms arriving as Swamiji did. Extra accommodation, warm food and even warm air, which had to be funnelled into the huge tent, became an urgent necessity, amazingly supplied by the indomitable Harishakti and her team of karma yogis.

When Swamiji opened the event he said, "God asked me what weather I wanted for the trip to Europe. I said, 'Please give us benevolent fine weather in Venice, it can be a little cooler in Slovenia with spring showers, and in Germany – blizzards.'" He was speaking to many people who had been working in freezing conditions all night, and their faces dropped with bewildered incredulity. "Because," he said,

"when the weather is fine, people are happy and wander off. When the cold comes, then we come together and experience the warmth of the heart."

The whole event left a sumptuous afterimage of white grounds and long stemmed fragrant red roses everywhere. As he was leaving, the previous summery weather returned and we were able to reflect on all the events of the few days we had just experienced, and realized one novel aspect of this gathering, the integration of children as serious participants in their own right, with their own duties.

The children everywhere like to be included in such events. There are thousands of them in BYMM and they have noted the effects of darshan and life in the ashram. They live at home and go to school and dedicate all their free time to the activities of BYMM, BSY, the ashram and their Guruji, and still their grades continue to improve. They are not dislocated from their family and friends, but feel deeply their ability to influence society positively. Here are a few impressions that Jyotsna, Swati and Vaibhav of BYMM share with us.

He protects us

"I used to hear about BSY, Munger from my uncle, father and grandmother. She also used to tell me many things about the childhood days of Swamiji when he had just come to the ashram. I was anxious to visit the yoga school so that I could relate to the things I heard from my grandmother. And, ultimately, that day came when I entered the ashram as a member of BYMM.

At the time of my very first darshan of Swamiji, I received a lot of love, affection and blessings. We, the children of BYMM, feel that Swamiji belongs to us. He loves us more than we love him. Whenever I have been to Ganga Darshan, I have had the opportunity to have his darshan. The greatest quality of Swamiji is that he is always happy and keeps on smiling. Whenever people ask me anything about Swamiji, I love to tell them about his programs, satsangs, etc. Before coming to the ashram, I did not know many people. But now many people approach me to hear about the ashram, yoga and Swamiji.



In November 2001 we went to Rikhia. There I caught a cold. Swamiji came to see me, he touched my forehead and I became all right. During the winter of the following years, he provided us with jackets so that we could remain protected from the chill. He continues to give us many good and useful things from time to time.

All the other members of my family and I hold Swamiji in great respect and remembrance."

Gurukul guidance

"The full name of Swamiji is Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati. He is like a flowing river and transmits the yogic knowledge to everyone who crosses his path. Transmitting his knowledge to the children, he has lighted the luminous flame in their life.

Kabirdas has said, 'If guru and Govina are both standing before me, I should touch the feet of guru first, because it is the guru who enabled me to recognize Govinda.'

Swamiji loves his disciples as his children. Ganga Darshan is like the ancient gurukul (school and family of the guru). We go there and learn the different aspects of yoga under his loving guidance.

We are really very fortunate that we have found a guru like Swamiji in this Kali Yuga."

Swamiji is the best

"Our Swamiji is handsome and attractive like a prince in a fairytale. He is full of all the good qualities. If you just see him, you are greatly influenced. The moment you meet him, you forget all your pains and sufferings and surrender happens. His thoughts, words and actions are all highly auspicious for everyone. Once you meet him, you cannot forget him; he acquires a place in your heart.

Swamiji is the best in all respects. As an individual, he is purushottam (highest human being) like Lord Rama. He is the greatest inspirer. His inspiration has proved auspicious to us at every step of our life. As a guru, he provides loving guidance to us and to all his disciples. We receive his guidance in all our activities.

He loves the children of BYMM, most. Therefore, we always say:

Swamiji ko lagate achchhe koun? Munger ke bachche aur kaun!

Whom does Swamiji love the most? The children of Munger, who else!

We have so many different kinds of experiences with Swamiji. While travelling with him, he is a fun co-traveller and guardian. While conducting any program, he is the right guide or instructor. His company is always pleasant and blissful.

I feel that BYMM and I are not separate identities. I am the body and BYMM is its life force. I am complete when united with BYMM and Swamiji. Being a member of BYMM and having Swamiji as guru, I have really attained heaven on earth."

Swamiji's second trip to Europe this year was to Kerdreolet, Brittany, where the gathering celebrated the Golden Jubilee of Satyananda Yoga. Swamiji once again explained the sadhana to move into the next stage of yoga, incorporating it into one's

lifestyle so as to meet the challenges of modern times as well as providing real spiritual depth. During the program a Celtic mandala was constructed in coloured sands and havan was held in the centre of the mandala. At the conclusion of the program the mandala was dismantled in the traditional tantric/Celtic way, giving an assurance of success in the yogic resolve of peace, plenty and prosperity for all.

Later this year, during Sat Chandi Mahayajna, Rikhiapeeth was born, when Swami Satyananda announced that in future Rikhia ashram would be known as Rikhiapeeth. A philanthropic institution and modern day gurukul, it will uphold the aim to disseminate ancient spiritual knowledge as propagated by the vedic lineage of rishis in the Vedas, Upanishads and Puranas to all, regardless of caste, creed, nationality, religion and gender. Swami Satyasangananda was appointed as the first Peethadhishwari of Rikhiapeeth, and was given the mandate to implement Swami Sivananda's three cardinal teachings: serve, love and give.



Sannyasa Sankalpa

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

If at all I have a sankalpa in my life, it is only to become a sannyasin – nothing more. Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda are the luminaries of our tradition and just because I've been declared Swami Satyananda's successor does not mean that I've become a luminary as well. Closeness or position or power is not an indication of one's attainment, but the sadhana one does to become better in life decides how far one advances.

When I succeeded Sri Swamiji, I thought about it. What is the meaning of succession? Is it being in charge of a property? Is it taking control of the finances? Is it directing people and ashrams around the world? Is it putting on a label that I have succeeded somebody? Anybody can manage the

ashram, paid or unpaid, sannyasin or householder. So it is not the presidency of an ashram that makes me Sri Swamiji's successor, because tomorrow somebody else can become the president in my place.

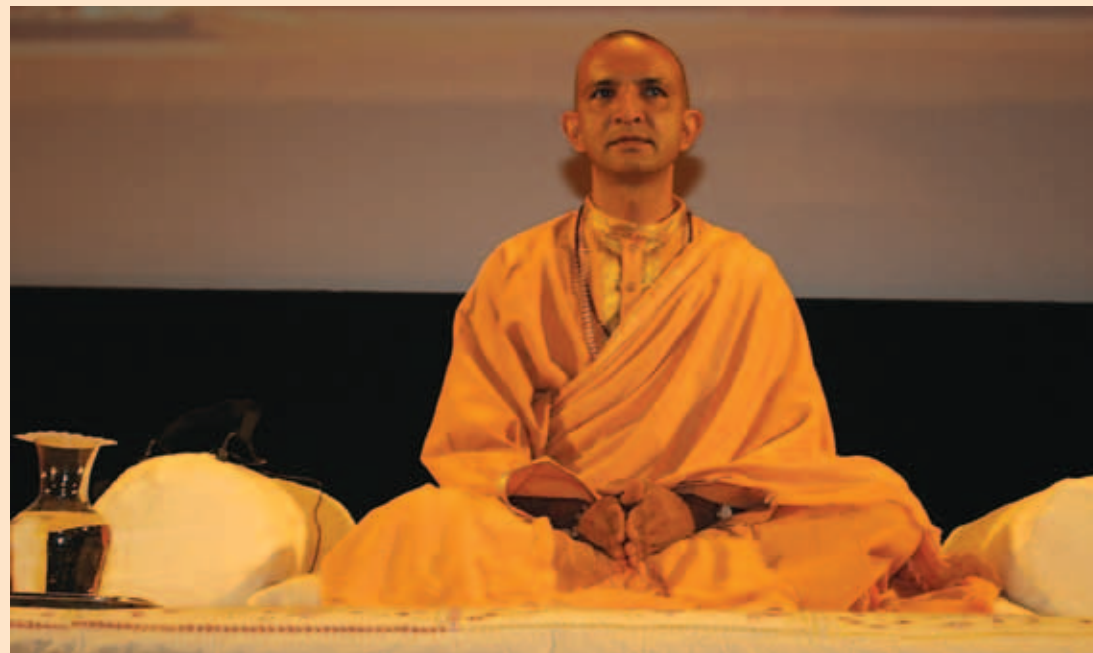
What do I have to succeed in? His sadhana? His tapasya? His renunciation? His conviction? His faith? His determination? These are the things that I need to imbibe in order to qualify myself to be a successor to Swami Satyananda. Not the position of presidency of the International Yoga Fellowship. Not the pomp and splendour that one can create or have. No! And the only way to do that properly is by becoming an ideal sannyasin.

After all, what is the direction of my life? Is it just to be here as manager and administrator of an ashram? Is this how I am going to pass my life till the end of my days, just sitting here, lecturing on the same thing, day in, day out? On

yoga, Vedanta, tantra, Samkhya, Upanishads, social life and so on? No! When I came here, my aim was sannyasa. What my guru gave me was sannyasa, and what I need to excel in is sannyasa.

As a sannyasin, life is solitary. Associating with people here is just like an association in the waiting room of a train station. Some people come for four months, some for four years, some for forty years – beyond that there is no other association with you. My real association, which is continuous and unbroken, is not with you people. If your visa expires, you will go back. If you don't like something, if you go into a head-trip, you will leave the ashram. If you dislike some rule, some discipline, some person, you will reject the place. You are not here because of sannyasa!

In fact, very few people in the world who join different paramparas and traditions are living sannyasa. They join





because of the community and they identify with that community, not with the ideal of sannyasa. By wearing geru, one does not become a sannyasin. By studying Prasthanatraya, Vedas, Upanishads, Gitas and other scriptures, one does not become a sannyasin. You can become an intellectual, you can become an exponent, but that is not an indication of having lived like a sannyasin.

Today, we love and hate each other, we associate and identify with each other, but how long will this identification last? Four months? Four years? Forty years at the maximum! In the last forty years, out of thousands that came only four or five

or six people remain. What happened to the rest who came with the zeal of sannyasa and who took sannyasa? When they could not handle the disciplines and hardships of sannyasa, they left.

From the very beginning, the only sankalpa I have had is to be a proper sannyasin. A proper sannyasin is dear to God. Swami Sivananda was like that. Swami Satyananda is like that. Those who think not of themselves, but who have a broader perspective and vision about everyone and everything in life. Such people are called rishis, those who can see, those who can develop a vision, those

who can chart a new path, those who can give a clear direction.

I consider myself to be one of the luckiest people on this planet. I have lived a charmed life with my guru's protection, all my life, even today. No problems or sickness in my life. The love and affection I have received from my guru has made me feel very special. It is definitely something I cherish and hold dear. Those people who think 'We are going to live with Swamiji' are mistaken, because there is no such thing. If one has to make a chair out of bamboo, the bamboo should be able to bend, otherwise

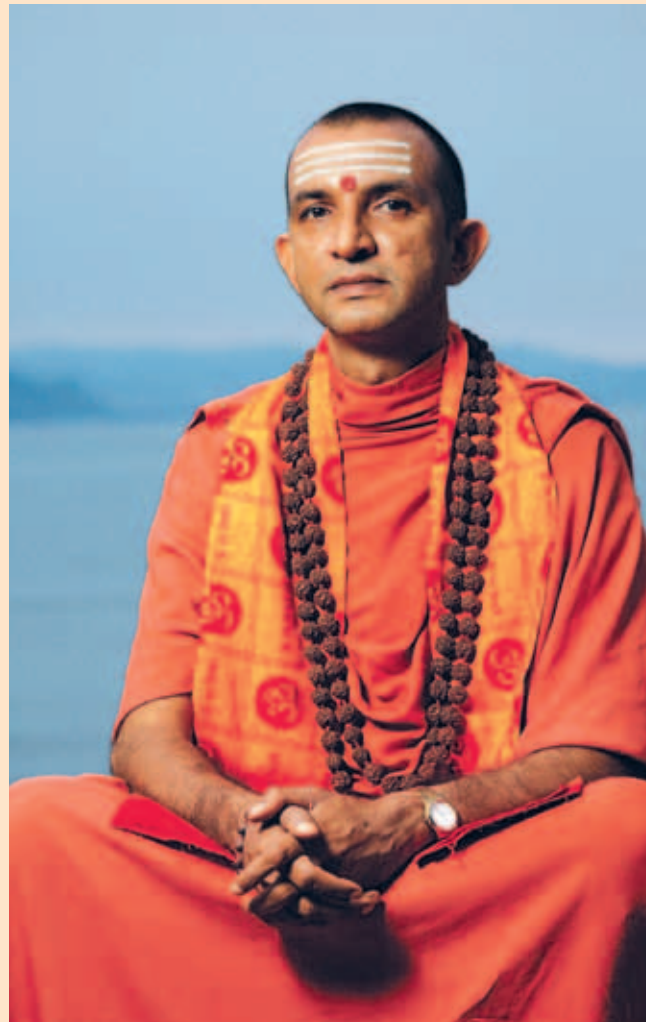
furniture cannot be made from it and it is rejected. So, in sannyasa one has to learn how to bend.

Sannyasa becomes complete in discipleship. One is always a disciple, never a guru. Guru is never a guru, guru is always a disciple. As a disciple, that guru is always connected with his guru, just as Swami Satyananda is connected to Swami Sivananda, just as I feel connected to Swami Satyananda.

With this connection, the disciple always has the guru in mind. When the guru is in one's mind, one becomes gurmukhi, but when guru is not in mind, one is manamukhi. 'I' becomes the centre. 'No, I can't adjust with this person. No, I can't live with that person. No, I can't talk to that person.' Why not? If, after taking sannyasa, you are still going to say, 'I can't, I can't', then you are not a sannyasin. There has to be adaptability, flexibility and serenity inside.

Sannyasa is not a way of escaping; rather it is a way of fighting with and transcending oneself. *Kamakrodhasccha lobhasccha dehe titashta taskaraha*. Fight with the negative qualities which dominate life now and make one tamasic and rajasic – transcend them, convert them. Therefore, sannyasa is a very tough sadhana. It is not a lifestyle for 'me'. It is not living in the ashram for 'me'.

If today, I get an instruction, I'll be out of this place in less than five minutes and not care about anyone of you. Because I have no association, no attachment. What is the use of attaching myself to you? I will not gain anything from that. What has anybody given me? Have you given me anything? Nothing! A hundred rupees, peanuts, cloth – that is available in the market. Flowers from the ashram gardens, my own flowers, are given to me! What has anyone given me. Nothing! Love? No! Trust? No! I have not received anything from anybody. So why do I need to associate with



anyone when you are not associating with me. So why should I consider or care about anyone else.

A relationship is always give and take, fifty-fifty. If something is given for life, something has to be given back for life. If something is given in small measure, things have to be returned in equal measure. Not that you ask God for

a boon of prosperity and give back one laddoo to please Him! That is why there is poverty, confusion and crises in people's lives.

People identify with people, not with a purpose. If there is identification with a purpose, then people become insignificant. If people identify with people, then the purpose becomes secondary. Therefore, keeping the purpose in focus and making a continuous effort to go forward is the sadhana of sannyasa.

There is a statement in the *Yoga Sutras* which says, "Become friendly with those who are happy. Develop compassion for those who are suffering. Become happy for those who are virtuous, and ignore those who are crooked."

When a patient first goes to a doctor, he is the victim of disease and the doctor is the master of healing. After some time the role changes. The doctor becomes the victim and the patient becomes the master. Most people belong to that category. And I definitely I do not want to be friendly with people who will eventually one day become my master and make me their victim.

Even friendship and compassion have to be weighed and given to the right person, with the right attitude. It is not free for all. If you seek my friendship, you have to be happy. If you seek my compassion, you have to be a sufferer. If you want me to be happy for you, you have to become virtuous and pious. And if you just remain as you are, then you can be what you are and I will just keep on ignoring you.

So, as a sannyasin, I walk a solitary path. There is nobody beside me, nobody around me, nobody in front of me, nobody behind me. The only thing that exists are little footprints that guide me and indicate that some time ago, somebody had passed this way. Beyond that there is no other indication. The footprints I see are those of

Swami Sivananda, of Ramana Maharshi, of Sri Aurobindo, of Shankaracharya, of Swami Satyananda. I can see their footprints going in the distance towards infinity and they have disappeared. And it is those footprints I have to follow. When I look around me, as to who else is following such footprints, I don't find anybody. Because everyone is too caught up in their own friendships, associations and mental hang-ups.

So sannyasa is a solitary path. A time is coming, not far off, when even I will renounce. I've had my share of life here and now other people have to take over. The institution is not guided by one person's presence, but by the spirit of the vision and the mission which has to be kept alive from generation to generation. Once I become free, I shall follow my sannyasa path for which I came into this life. All this is only a way to exhaust one's own karmas and samskaras.

If I was doing the same thing outside, I would be doing it for 'me'. But what I am doing here now is not for me but for a mission, for a tradition. Once my chapter has been written, then another chapter of the book has to begin. In our parampara, in the history of Munger, Swami Satyananda wrote the first chapter of the history from 1963 to 1983.

I joined the ashram at the age of four. I was sent out as a yoga teacher at the age of eleven and I was recalled by Sri Swamiji in 1983 at the age of twenty-three. I was the youngest sannyasin in India to take over the reins of any institution. When I was thirty, Sri Swamiji initiated me as a paramahansa. Once again I was the youngest sannyasin to be declared a paramahansa.

But what does all that mean today? Nothing! Because I know I am not qualified. 'The woods are lovely, dark and deep, but I have many miles to go before I sleep.' Do I stop to admire the beauty of the woods or do I continue with my journey? I have to continue with my journey. If I can



live sannyasa, then I can live the vision of our parampara. Therefore, my only resolution in life has been to become a good sannyasin.

The qualifications of a good sannyasin are enumerated in the *Bhagavad Gita* (12:13-14):

*Adveshtha sarvabhootaanaam maitrah karuna eva cha
Nirmamo nirahankarah samaduhkhasukhah kshami.*

*Santushtha satatam yogi yataatmaa dridhanishchayah
Mayyarpitamanobuddhiryo madbhaktah sa me priyah.*

'One who hates no creature, who is friendly and compassionate to all, who is free from attachment and egoism, balanced in pleasure and pain, and forgiving, ever content, steady in meditation, self-controlled, possessed of firm conviction, with the mind and intellect dedicated to Me, is dear to Me.'

So, from time to time, I think about the aim of my life and I remind myself, "Don't get caught in pain or in pleasure, with an individual or with a community." If you are writing the last pages of your chapter, then you have to be on your own. Then you are free to live sannyasa and aspire to succeed in the real sense in *tyaga*, renunciation, in *tapasya*, austerity, in *karuna*, compassion, in *atmabhava*, oneness with all. It is very difficult.

People cannot even handle a negative word without getting disturbed and they believe they can handle the awakening of kundalini and the mind! That is my ultimate trial. Getting a degree is not difficult. If you take sannyasa today, I will give you the degree now to say that you've become a sannyasin. But that is only a piece of paper which has no meaning, except maybe for you, because you think, "I've become a member of a club." But not in reality. In reality, sannyasa is a sadhana, it is tapasya!

If I can go through that process and come out, then I'll consider myself to be a sannyasin in the making. But till now I've not even started the process. I'm just whiling away my time, listening to people's head-trips and trying to solve their problems. That is not sannyasa, nor the destiny of my life. Therefore, my resolution has always been: God, grant me the strength to be a sannyasin in the same sense and manner that my guru wants me to be. So when you pray, include this sentence in your prayers as well: 'God, give Swami Niranjan the chance to become a true sannyasin in his life.' That is my resolution. ॐ



January

Swami Satyananda gave darshan and satsang at Rikhiapheeth on the 1st.

From the 3rd to 9th, Srimad Bhagavata Saptah was held at Ganga Darshan by Swami Govinda Giri from Maharashtra.

From the 10th to 22nd January, a group of young sportspeople and instructors attended a program at Ganga Darshan, organized by the Sports Authority of India (SAI).

From 19th to 25th January, Dr Swami Nirmalananda conducted a yoga shivir at BHEL YMM, Bhopal. She also addressed Kasturba Nursing College students and spoke to students from schools run by BHEL Bhopal.

On the 23rd, Basant Panchami, the Foundation Day of BSY, was celebrated at Ganga Darshan with havan and satsang by Swami Niranjana.

At Rikhiapheeth, from 24th January to 19th February, ladies from Iran attended a yoga course conducted by Swamis Satyadharma and Nityachaitanya.

February

Bal Yoga Diwas was celebrated on 14th February at Ganga Darshan by BYMM.

A Yoga Sadhana Shivir was conducted at Rikhiapheeth from the 14th to 16th, culminating in Sivaratri and the blessings of Swami Satyananda.

On the 18th, Swami Niranjana spoke at Zakir Hussain Middle School, Suryagarha.

A Yoga Teacher Training camp was conducted at Rikhiapheeth from 20th February to 12th March by Swamis Sumitrananda and Nityachaitanya. Swami Satsangi gave satsang. On the 4th, Swami Satyananda gave darshan.

Swami Niranjana was in South India from the 20th to 28th February. In Chennai he gave satsang at the Chinmaya Heritage Centre, mantra meditations at Shiva Darshan Yoga Vidyalaya and visited DAV Girls Senior Secondary School. In Bangalore, from the 23rd to 25th, he gave satsangs at the Satya Sai Auditorium,

Koramangala, visited Sophia School, addressed the Young Presidents Organization at Hotel Ista, and gave satsangs at Atma Darshan Yogashram. In Shimaoga, Swamiji visited the Body Temple Yoga Centre on the 26th and gave satsang at Kuvempu Rang Mandir.

On the 28th, Swamiji visited HH Shri Swami Bharati Tirtha, Shankaracharya of Sringeri Math.

March

The Chief Minister of Bihar, Sri Nitish Kumar, visited Ganga Darshan on the 10th.

On the 11th, Swami Niranjana gave satsang for Sangrampur YMM.

On the 21st and 22nd, Swami Niranjana gave satsang at Chandisthan, Munger.



On the 31st, Swamiji spoke to a gathering at the Sahai residence in Bhagalpur.

Swami Gorakhnath conducted a yoga shivir from the 20th to 26th, organized by Satyananda Yoga Kendra, Jamshedpur, and spoke at the J.R.D. Tata Sports Complex, R.D. Tata Technical Institute, DAV School and Sri Krishna Public School, Bistupur.

April

From the 6th to 11th, a group from the Body Temple Yoga Centre in Shimoga, Karnataka, participated in a program conducted by BYMM at Ganga Darshan.

On the 18th, Swami Niranjana gave satsang to participants in an introductory yoga course conducted by BYMM from the 15th to 18th.

On the 20th, Swami Niranjana visited the Jhoor Kali temple in Safiabadd.

From the 26th to 29th, Swami Kaivalyananda conducted a yoga shivir for the Saharsa Yoga Mahotsav. He also gave satsang at the Kali temples in Nauhatta and Panchgachiya.

On the 26th, Swami Niranjana visited Satyam Om Yoga Vidyalaya, Bilaspur, and conducted havan, kirtan and satsang.

Swami Niranjana was in Amarkantak from the 27th to 29th at the invitation of Swami Sharadananda Saraswati of Mrityunjaya Ashram, Amarkantak.

From 27th April to 4th May, a group of children and adults from Satyananda Yoga Centre, Triplicane, led by Jignasu Dasharath, participated in ashram life in Rikhiapheeth and Munger.

On the 30th, Swami Niranjana conducted satsang at the City Hall, Raigarh, and at the Jindal Steel & Power Corporation Club.

May

A group led by Sannyasis Chandramani and Sadhanamala from Raipur visited Ganga Darshan from the 2nd to 5th.

On the 5th, Swami Niranjana inaugurated the sadhana hall of the Yoga Shiksha Kendra in Jamui.

From the 13th to 19th, YMM conducted a course at Ganga Darshan for aspirants from Dharhara and Sangrampur.

On the 18th, Swami Niranjana visited the Shiva temple in Munger and participated in Rudrabhishek.

A group from Suryagarha visited Ganga Darshan from the 23rd to 28th, and a group from Indore from the 25th to 30th.

On the 30th, Swami Niranjana conducted Mahamrityunjaya havan at the construction site of the Ganga Bridge in Munger and gave satsang.

From 31st May to 3rd June, BYMM conducted an Introductory Yoga program for 9,000 children at the Polo Ground, Munger.

From 30th May to 6th June, groups from Dharhara, Barauni and Bhagalpur visited Ganga Darshan.

June

From the 1st to 21st, a Teachers Training Course was conducted at Ganga Darshan by Swami Tyagraj and Sannyasi Shraddhamati.

An introductory yoga seminar was conducted from the 6th to

9th at Fulka High School by Fulka Yoga Vidya Kendra. On the 9th, Swami Niranjana gave participants the 'yoga capsule' sadhana.

From the 10th to 17th, Swami Gorakhnath conducted a yoga shivir at Yoga Dhyana Kendra, Barauni.

From the 13th to 24th, BYMM conducted a Pracharak Satra at Ganga Darshan.

On the 16th, Swami Gorakhnath gave satsang to Marwari Yuva Manch, Begusarai.

From the 21st to 25th, Bihar Education Project Council members participated in yoga classes given by Swami Gyanbhikshu and ashram life.

From the 21st to 30th, Swami Kaivalyananda visited Bhuj, Gujarat, to guide the Yoga Teachers Training course held from the 1st to 30th at Sivananda Balakashram by Sannyasi Premmani.



From 29th June to 1st July, Swami Satyadharma conducted a residential seminar at the Satyananda Ashram near Jangheung, South Korea.

From 29th June to 1st July, Dr Swami Nirmalananda conducted a pranayama workshop at the Satyananda Yoga Centre, Mumbai. She also conducted a pranayama sadhana shivir in Indore from the 12th to 18th July, organized by Satyananda Yoga Kendra.

July

On the 1st, Swami Niranjan inaugurated the Sankalpa Gurukul, Munger.

Swami Niranjan was in Bangalore from the 27th to 30th for the Guru Poornima Mahotsav, organized by Atma Darshan Yogashram, Bangalore, for 6,000 participants. On the 30th, Guru Poornima day, chanting, havan and Paduka poojan were conducted.

At Rikhiapeeth, a sadhana shivir was held from the 28th to



30th, culminating in Guru Poornima celebrations. Swami Satyananda gave darshan and satsang on the morning of the 29th. On Guru Poornima day, the kanyas performed Paduka poojan and chanted Saundarya Lahari in the presence of Sri Swamiji.

In Munger, Guru Poornima was celebrated at Sivananda Ashram.

From the 8th to 14th, a group from Jamshedpur, led by Sannyasi Buddhimani, visited Ganga Darshan.

August

From the 1st to 21st, a Teachers Training Course was held at Ganga Darshan. Swami Niranjan gave satsangs. Swamis Suryaprem, Vigyanchaitanya and Yogakanti conducted asana, pranayama, yoga nidra and meditation classes.

Sri Radha Krishna Jhoolan Mahotsav was celebrated at Rikhiapeeth from the 24th to 28th. Swami Satyananda gave darshan and satsang on three consecutive mornings.

BYMM conducted two courses at Ganga Darshan for its new recruits.

September

From the 1st to 8th, Bhagavata Saptah was celebrated at Rikhiapeeth. Sivananda Janmotsav was celebrated on the 8th.

On the 4th, Sri Krishna's birthday was celebrated at Ganga Darshan with chanting of the Bhagavad Gita and havan.

On the 12th, Sri Swamiji's sannyasa initiation day was commemorated at Ganga Darshan with a havan conducted by BYMM and satsang by Swami Niranjan.

From the 10th to 12th and the 14th to 16th, principals and senior teachers from 43 secondary schools in Lakhisarai attended a Yoga Orientation program at Ganga Darshan. Swami Niranjan gave satsang. Classes were conducted by Swamis Srimukhananda and Harikripa.

On the 22nd, Swami Niranjan addressed students and teachers at Amarpur Uchcha School, Lakhisarai.

From the 20th to 30th, a Kriya Yoga course was conducted at Ganga Darshan by Swami Yogakanti for students from Chennai. BYMM conducted courses at Ganga Darshan from the 20th to 29th.

October

From the 1st to 10th, a Kriya Yoga course was conducted at Ganga Darshan by Swami Yogakanti for students from Bangalore, Mumbai and Chennai. It was the final course in a series of three courses held for the group over three years.

Swami Niranjan gave satsang at Chandisthan, Munger, on the 13th and 14th. On the 15th, he visited Dashbhuji temple in Munger, accompanied by children from BYMM.

A group of boys from Punjab, Haryana and Jammu & Kashmir, excelling in sport at national and international levels, along with two coaches, were sponsored by SAI to attend a yoga program at Ganga Darshan from 22nd October to 6th November. Swami Tyagraj conducted the program.

November

Members of the Association of Surgeons of India visited Ganga Darshan on the 4th for a program of introductory yogic practices, given by Swamis Shankarananda, Satyadharma, Kaivalyananda and Dr Swami Nirmalananda, who also spoke at an ASI Bihar Chapter conference in Munger.

On the 3rd, Swami Niranjan gave the closing keynote address at a seminar in Delhi attended by members of the World Presidents Organization.

December

The 12th and final Rajasooya Yajna was held at Rikhiapeeth from the 10th to 14th. Over 20,000 people participated, including more than 2,000 visitors from over 45 countries. The Devi was invoked and worshipped through the chanting of mantras, a continuous flow of giving and the presence of the gurus. The yajna rituals and chanting of Durga Saptashati were conducted by pandits from Varanasi. The kanyas of Rikhi sang bhajans and kirtans. Each day culminated in parikrama of the Devi's vedi, guru poojan and arati. All who came received prasad. The 1,000 kanyas and batuks of Rikhi received new clothes each day as well as other gifts. On the final day, Kanya Poojan was held. Poornahuti followed and the Devi was bid farewell. Swami Niranjan and Swami Satsangi presided over the entire program. On the final day Sri Swamiji blessed all with his darshan and spoke for over seven hours on

a vast range of subjects, including the historical significance of Rama, the essence of yoga, global warming, yajna, Devi and the children of Rikhia.

A Kriya Yoga and Tattwa Shuddhi Sadhana course was conducted at Rikhiapeeth from the 18th to 24th by Swamis Satyadharma and Sumitrananda. Swami Satsangi gave satsangs.

Christmas was celebrated at Rikhiapeeth and Ganga Darshan with a presentation by Yogic Studies students and prasad distribution.



In Ganga Darshan and Rikhiapeeth, and in many other ashrams around the world, Swami Sivananda's sadhana of serve, love and give, be good, do good, meditate and realize has taken on a new dimension because it has become a lifestyle. Swami Niranjan was teaching us about the four phases of yoga: first, being a practitioner for the sake of physical fitness; second, being a sadhaka to achieve the goals set by yoga which includes mind management. The third was making yoga a lifestyle, and that is what we are seeing when we live in the ashram, or when we really make the Yoga Capsules the integrating factor in our lives. And it is not only affecting the lives of the sadhakas, increasingly, it is inspiring and releasing the energy and fresh awareness of the children who are given the opportunities to absorb the positive samskaras of yoga effortlessly and naturally, as their birthright.

People come to the ashram from faraway lands with the one burning desire – to give. It is an amazing concept, a total revolution, an effulgent lotus flower that has evolved from the mud of our consumerism. And here we see the fourth progression of yoga, that a couple of years ago we weren't ready to even think about seriously: yogic culture.

'Yoga will become a mighty force and will change the course of world events.' This was a sankalpa, not just a slogan. Now, at the yajna in Rikhiapeeth we can see it has come about and another sankalpa is naturally emerging. The people who come give of their wealth, their capabilities, their minds, but most of all they give love, to their fellow neighbours, to people they've only just met, and to

people they will never meet again. They want to help and they are actually training themselves to do so; making it the focus of their lives in many cases. How may one describe this process, if not as the fulfilment of a vision.

As Swami Satyananda has often said, his life goes in 20-year cycles. Born in 1923, he met his guru in 1943, founded BSY in 1963, gave over the Presidency of BSY to Swami Niranjan in 1983, came out of seclusion 1993 and announced the reason for it in 2003. Swami Niranjan has hinted that his life goes in 11-year cycles. Born in 1960, initiated into sannyasa and sent overseas to spread the mission of yoga in 1971, recalled to India and Presidency of BSY in 1982. In 1983 he conducted the Golden Jubilee World Yoga Convention in honour of his guru's surrender to Swami Sivananda.

The next conjunction came in 2003/04 when Swami Satyananda decided to reveal his sankalpa of the Rajasooya yajna

for peace, plenty and prosperity for all. At the same time, Swami Niranjan began to tell the swamis and devotees in Ganga Darshan that he was going to retire from the Presidency of BSY, although he would continue to guide us. His sankalpa had been made, and just as Sri Swamiji had stayed for five years to groom him for the task ahead, he had started the training of his successor.

We all wondered if this meant that we now had to survive, as we did when Sri Swamiji left, while Swamiji began travelling around the planet, or retired into seclusion, or opened a completely new dimension of the journey?

The sapling of a new tree emerged in 1993, the third 11-year cycle for Swami Niranjan, when Sri Swamiji, who had remained unavailable for the intervening years, began giving darshan again to his devotees in the form of Rama Naam Aradhana. In that year, a young boy called Suraj from Spain (who would later become Swami Suryaprakash) managed to persuade his parents to leave



him behind for a joyous three-month stay in the ashram including the World Yoga Convention. I still remember the way he always tagged along behind Swamiji whenever he got the chance. Then in 1995 Sri Swamiji gave an open tantric initiation to Swami Niranjan with the symbolic gifts of the crystal mala and shivalingam, his chief aids in tantric sadhana, and Swami Niranjan was hailed as his spiritual successor. The events of the time were named Sita Kalyanam and Sat Chandi Maha Yajna, but as he said, some things are being revealed and some are not – and we now know that this was the first year of the Rajasooya yajna . . .

Go with the flow

“Many people have spoken about their first encounter with Swamiji, their association, their impressions and their experiences. I, however, although I have thought about it, do not really have any first impressions. This is because, to my good fortune, I have had the privilege of being in Swamiji’s presence since the day of my birth. That was in 1982. And since that very first day, I realize now, I was ‘booked’ for life. Of this, however, I only came to know much later. It was only when I had finally come to stay for good, in 1999, that Swamiji revealed to me that

stands at a crossroad and one has to decide which way to go. But I have never had to make that choice, because I was simply attracted this way, I knew that it was the right move for me, as I was merely following my heart’s call.

In fact, even when I came to the ashram to stay, the thought never came to me even once that I am ‘leaving my home’ or ‘renouncing’, or ‘taking sannyasa’. I did not even know how long I was going for. All I knew was that being with Swamiji was the right thing for me, so I came to Ganga Darshan. Beyond that I made no plans whatsoever.



That first conjunction of 82/83 also marked Swami Suryaprakash’s birth in the USA to a family of Indian devotees. His grandfather, Siru was one of Sri Swamiji’s staunchest disciples, and the seed of close connection has continued through the generations. So the young Suraj was initiated by Swami Niranjan as Swami Suryaprakash for the new millennia, and simply surrenders to his guru’s guidance and the flow of destiny.

on that day, 17 years ago, he had made a sankalpa that I would come and live with him. And so it happened.

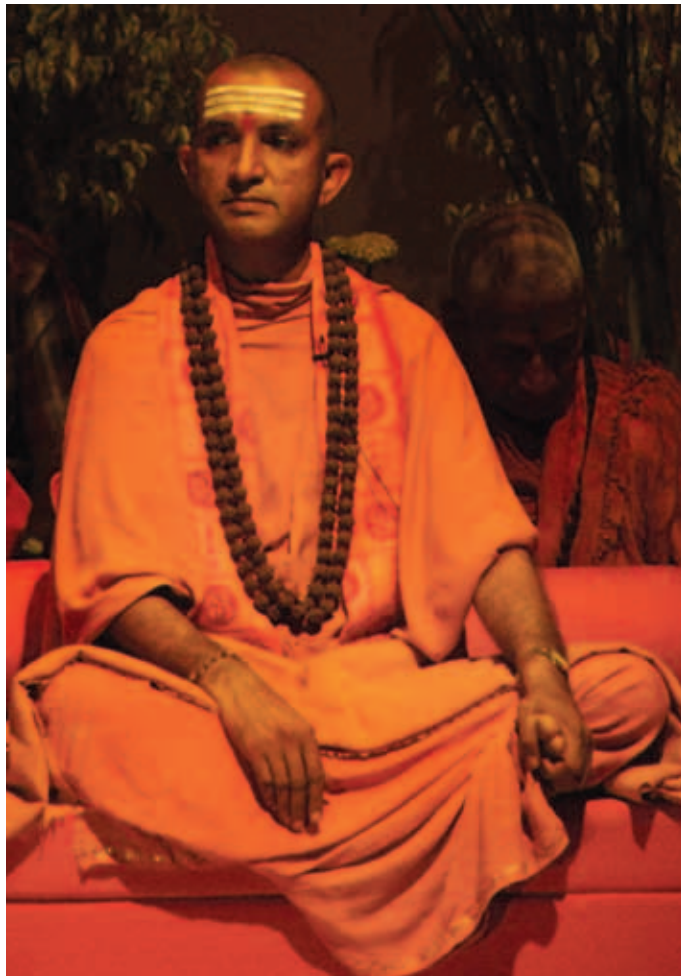
My coming to the ashram, and my choosing to lead the life of a sannyasin, was very natural and spontaneous. I would not even call it a choice, but just the natural thing to do. One can only make a choice when more than one option exists, when one



I first came to the ashram when I was seven years old. At that time my sister was going to study in Mussoorie and I had gone with my parents to drop her off. After leaving her there we came to Munger and stayed about a week. My next trip to Munger was when I was 11. This was in September 1993, at the time when the preparations for the World Yoga Convention that was to take place in November were underway. At that time I

had also come with my parents for just a few days, but on the eve of our departure, I refused to go back with them. Why? I do not know myself, I just wanted to stay. So I hid behind Swamiji's dhoti, as that seemed to be the safest place if I wanted to stay back. And so I did. I stayed back alone for three months.

During those three months I was made in-charge of all of the kids who were around at the time, to keep them engaged, together, happy, and basically out of the way, as there was too much work going on. I also started wearing geru. Since Swamiji



wore two dhotis, I decided I would also wear two dhotis, and I disposed of all of my other clothes (even though I knew I was to return within a few months). People used to ask me what type of initiation I had received. I would ask them 'What is initiation?' but I never really understood anything they said.

After the convention was over, I had no desire to go back home. In those three months Ganga Darshan had become home for me and I did not want to leave. For the first time I felt like a fish in water. I approached Swamiji and asked him if I could stay. He told me that now was not the time as my family was waiting for me and I had to go back to them. But that once I finished my studies, I could return. So I started packing up. I would be travelling with an Indian couple who were also going to Spain. We were scheduled to leave at 5 am, and I appeared at 4:45 am with my luggage, wearing my two geru dhotis. When my co-travellers saw me, they immediately asked me to put on civilian clothes, as they had no intention of travelling all the way from Munger to Spain with a child in orange robes.

I don't know what took hold of me at the time, but I simply refused to take off my geru. They threatened to leave me behind, but that did not work either, as I was only too happy to stay. They were stuck with me all the way, in geru. When I look back on this incident today, it still doesn't make sense to me. Where does an 11-year-old child, who has grown up in the US and Europe, gone to school, had a normal western upbringing, get this mad obsession about wearing geru?

So I returned to school, and continued my studies. I remembered what Swamiji had said to me, but the end of my studies seemed too far away and I had to go back to Munger, even if only for a few months. I came to Ganga Darshan again in July 1996. These few months ended up being a whole year. I had actually planned this from the very beginning. Since I knew a whole year would have been out of the question initially, every time anybody asked me when I was leaving I would tell them 'next month'. I returned to Spain in June 1997.

I continued my studies for two more years, by which time I was about to finish my High School. Before appearing for my

final exams I had already booked my ticket for India. The day I sat my last exam my bags were packed, and I departed the very next morning. Even today I do not know what I scored, as that last exam for me represented the closure of an episode.

I finally reached Munger in June 1999, with three large suitcases, which Swamiji almost instantly reduced to one small bag. And that too in a very ingenious way. Within the first month of my ashram stay, he had my room shifted at least six times. And of course, who wanted to lug around so much luggage! From





room to room my bags reduced in size substantially, till finally I thought: 'Forget it. Just keep the minimum you need.' By that time I had learnt lesson #1 of the many that were to follow.

Actually, living with Swamiji means learning, every moment. Although he has always been accessible, Swamiji is a person of very few words, yet his teachings and messages are continuous, through example, actions, behaviour and hints. Even a joke contains a message. Everything which he says and teaches, he exemplifies and embodies in his personality and character. And his ability to put himself in the shoes of the other, make his teachings very powerful and effective, inspiring the other person to transform themselves by applying the teachings.

The first transformation came to me officially in January of 2000, when I was initiated by Swamiji into poorna sannyasa. Along with the initiation came a new beginning, a fresh start. The previous person had died, and an aspiration to be a sannyasin was born. What I have understood about sannyasa is that it is a process of transformation. And until and unless there is an intensity of desire, transformation cannot and does not take place. There has to be an intensity, there has to be an obsession,

and there has to be a vibrant dynamism and vitality in order to bring about a positive transformation in oneself.

Connecting to an inspiration, identifying with something larger than oneself, living an ideal, dedicating oneself to a cause, having no private life, sacrificing it all and jumping into a sea of opportunities to expand one's own horizons, to become a better person, to come out of oneself and to be able to understand the needs of another person and to have a chance to help, uplift and inspire the person, to have a direction, an aim and a goal in life, are the basis of sannyasa.

I consider myself very fortunate in that regard, as I feel like the guinea pig who has always had the first-hand experience in learning from Swamiji. I have always looked up to him as a role model, somebody whose footsteps I wish to follow. He personifies everything I aspire for, and whatever I find lacking in myself I see alive in him, in a charismatic and natural way.

My training then started, and is going on till today in several phases. And the beauty of it is that when I look back, I am able to connect all the dots and see that we all form part of a master plan. Under Swamiji's supervision, experience and far-sightedness, we are being guided in a very precise and systematic way. Although the instructions and tasks which I have received are many, there are some instances which, on reflection, stand out.

The first instruction I was given was to become like a sponge, to observe and to learn as much as I could in all the different areas and departments of the ashram; an endless task that continues even today. And to remain constantly engaged in learning and trying to do things in a better way every time. After having been told this much, I was sent off to participate in the various activities of the different departments of the ashram.

I spent the first four years running messages, coordinating activities, working in publications, processing orders, customers' accounts and correspondence, in accounts with income and expenditure, in chanting – practising bhajans, kirtans and

stotras, and in all sorts of other activities from dawn to dusk. I would try to involve myself as much as I could, picking up a little more every day. For some time I was also made to sleep in a different building every night, so as to know the place. I have stayed in all the buildings of the ashram.

In the process of all of this I also had to learn Hindi, as I did not speak a word before I came to the ashram. With such a busy agenda there was no time to study, and everything had to be picked up on the move, learning new words every day, till one day I could form a sentence, and eventually, after learning several sentences I was able to communicate. Today 70 percent of the ashram activities are delegated in Hindi.

My next phase then started in administration and coordination, where for the next few years I was put to assist different people who were then at the helm, in doing the administration work of the ashram: ensuring that everything ran smoothly, planning and organizing events, involving myself in all the activities, whether they be at the construction site, in the gardens, electrical or maintenance. Learning all the systems, routines and disciplines of the ashram in all the different areas. In this Swamiji has always been very strict, and does not spare anybody. There is one instance I will never forget.



Once, Swamiji had been very fierce in putting some residents to task for having broken ashram discipline. At first I was taken aback by the whole scene, but after they had all gone he turned to me, and said, 'Surya, I am a very tough man. I am a sannyasin more than a man. All my relationships can go to hell, but not the commitment which I have made to my guru and to God. I do not tolerate disciplines being broken because of people's whims and carelessness.' The depth, intensity and conviction with which he said it felt like a rubber stamp being imprinted upon my consciousness.

Then the next phase began, where I was made to play the role of the eyes and the ears. It became my responsibility to inform him and report about everything that went on, and then to relay his instructions and ensure that everything that took place was as per his visualization. This became especially tricky when he started touring more often, and at times he would spend over a month away from the ashram, then return only for three to four days, after which he would again be travelling to his next program.

Often the organizers of his programs chose venues where the telephone connection was hopeless and e-mail was out of the question. So what to do? I had to start asking myself how



he would respond to the different situations that came up. So gradually I tried to develop this sixth sense so as to make the right decision. Swamiji would return for such short periods, and there would be so much to tell, that I would always prepare my reports, queries and files and go pick him up at the station so that he would be up-to-date before entering the ashram gates. This kind of routine continues till today.

On Basant Panchami in 2008, Swamiji announced that I must now accept responsibility for BSY. I was to shoulder the responsibilities involved in the administration of the ashram and all the activities. Yet I don't feel I have any role to play, except to flow with the current as and how it comes, as it is Swamiji who is at the helm. Anything that I can do is a result of his training. He knows me better than I know myself, and perfectly well knows how much I am able to handle and how to push my buttons. My only role is to remain in tune with the frequencies. The rest is all his doing.

There is only one way to learn how to swim, one has to jump into the ocean of life. It requires courage, determination, faith in oneself, and faith in the divine will that guides the currents. But these requirements are not alien to us, because they come as part and parcel of our being, they are an intimate part of our nature. We have to only discover them, and allow them to be expressed naturally and spontaneously.

There is a Hindi poem, written by Swami Shankarananda, that expresses this sentiment beautifully:

*Amidst the waves of the ocean our boat has been placed,
In the mercy of the ocean its paddles now lie.
But when the currents of the ocean are under your command,
How do we care where the shores lie, and where its deep waters?*

You have placed me here, and you have created the situations around me. I accept every moment which you are giving me, gratefully and respectfully, as opportunities so I may grow, evolve, and connect with others through love and service. Where is this path leading me? How does that



matter when you are guiding it, as it can only bring me nearer to you.

I have never seen Swami Sivananda, nor lived much with Swami Satyananda, but I identify with their teachings and aspire to make them a part of my life, as I see them flourishing and blossoming in Swamiji's life. Although I may not have had much interaction with Sri Swamiji, my silent relationship with him has always been very vibrant and alive. I feel his loving, caring and expansive presence deep within, and know that although this is just the beginning for me, that I have plenty to learn and must grow in many ways, he has been the guiding light in my life. And I am eternally grateful to him for having given me this opportunity to serve his mission, and for having inspired me to live as a sannyasin under Swamiji's guidance."

So let's keep the faith. The future is in the hands of the children, and in the present, right now, we must ensure that they receive the right experiences and the right samskaras so that they can move into the next millennia with the tools of yoga at their disposal. Their natural inheritance being a working knowledge of Rishi Patanjali's ashtanga yoga for personal evolution, and Swami Sivananda's ashtanga yoga as their lifestyle. Now for the yogic civilization. Keep the faith.

Hari Om Tat Sat.

Next Phase

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

With the relinquishing of my administrative role as President of BSY in 2008, I am entering into a new phase of sannyasa life. I will explain this with the example of a doctor's life.

A doctor lives in his house. Every day, he wakes up, gets ready for the day, has breakfast, and then goes to the hospital to discharge his duties. The entire day he meets with patients, some are new and some old. New associations are made and some old associations are let go of. At the hospital, his life is spent executing the role of a doctor. When he returns home, he puts away his bag, freshens up and changes his clothes. He sits down and relaxes, and after resting, meets with the patients who have lined up before his house. He doesn't go back to hospital again, but meets the patients who have come to his house. In brief, that is what is happening with me.

Until now, I had been working as a propagator. In this role, one had to move in the field, travel and meet with people. I travelled through India, through many other countries; I addressed people in hospitals, clubs, schools, ashrams and convention centres. I contributed to the movement of yoga.



When I retired from the presidency of BSY, I continued to play the role of a propagator. I have had two roles, one of a propagator and the other of an administrator. For twenty-five years, I was the administrator of BSY. In that role, I would meet everyone who came to the ashram. I would listen to everyone's problems, do all that an administrator needs to do. In 2008, I gave that administrative responsibility to Swami Suryaprakash. But I continued to discharge the role of a propagator. Now, that has also ended. Now I don't have to go anywhere. I will stay at one place.

So just like a doctor, I worked the whole day in the hospital and now, having returned home, I am freshening up, and preparing for my next phase.

In the life of a sannyasin, there are four different stages: kutichaka, bahudaka, hamsa and paramahamsa. Kutichaka is the stage where the disciple lives in the presence of the guru and undergoes training for twelve years. He stays in the ashram, receives learning and performs seva. The meaning of *kutichaka* is one who lives in a *kutiya*, hut. He is the dweller of a hut, of an ashram. *Bahudaka* means one who lives with many people. So, in the kutichaka stage, one lives in the presence of guru and receives his teachings. In the bahudaka stage, the sannyasin propagates the teachings of the guru.

Until now, I was living the bahudaka stage. I was a kutichaka until the age of eleven, and then I started travelling and propagating the yogic teachings and became a bahudaka. Now that stage is over and, according to the sannyasa tradition, I enter the stage of hamsa. For, in the hamsa state, one has to experience and realize the precepts of spirituality and sannyasa in one's own life.

In the Indian tradition, life is divided in four parts or ashramas: brahmacharya ashrama, grihastha ashrama, vanaprastha ashrama and sannyasa ashrama. In brahmacharya ashrama one receives learning, one is a recipient. It is a stage where one develops skills and acquires ability and excellence. This is equivalent to the kutichaka stage in the life of a sannyasin.

The next stage is grihastha ashrama in social life, when the individual takes on responsibilities, expands his home and family,



looks after their welfare, acquires wealth, status, friends and recognition. These are the duties of grihastha ashrama. This can be compared with the bahudaka stage, as in this the sannyasin travels everywhere to inspire people and creates something through the support he receives from all. His house and family are expanded in the bahudaka stage. Thus, kutichaka stage is personal training and bahudaka stage is propagation of that training.

The third stage in social life is vanaprastha ashrama, retirement. One does not go to the office every day any more. Having relinquished the responsibilities of a grihastha, one readjusts life in order to move towards the new phase. If a police officer takes retirement after forty years of service, but still behaves like a DG at home, he will have a very difficult time. So, the thinking pattern is re-adjusted and a process of re-educating oneself takes place.

In the same way, in the hamsa stage one has to distance oneself from the life that one led until now. After re-planning one's life, one has to 'reformat' it. Re-planning, re-adjusting, re-accommodating and re-educating oneself to live the next phase of life. For forty years I have been a bahudaka, can the habits formed over forty years change in one month?

When the president of a country finishes his term, he also relinquishes all the rights of the presidency. Those responsibilities and rights go to the next president. The previous president no longer represents the nation. He does not put his signature on

documents nor does he give advice on how to run the country. In the same way, I have also relinquished my rights. Now, if people wish to meet me to ask for advice on an ailment or to get a discount in a course fee, I direct them to those responsible for these matters. They have to go through the ashram system. I have given up those roles. I only meet with people who come to receive spiritual guidance. Now my job is to give spiritual instructions, and not to involve in administration. I have to learn and live and you have to learn too. This is the stage of hamsa – when the sannyasin frees himself from his external karmas and spends his time in *chintana* and *manana*, contemplation and reflection, and deepening the sannyasa understanding.

I have not left the service of yoga or service of my guru. I have only given up the rights, the power and the authority. I am available as a sannyasin in the service of the organization. The work of yoga will continue, and in a bigger and much more expansive way. The work of yoga will grow at a much faster pace.

Many people have been coming to the ashram for seva in ‘Conversations’. This is a project to present a new generation of books in the coming years. When we first published Sri Swamiji’s books, whether in India or overseas, nobody knew what yoga was. Yoga was introduced to society in the decades of fifties, sixties and seventies. The system of yoga that Sri Swamiji and this organization put forward at that time has now grown into a laden, leafy tree. The concepts and presentation of yoga put forward by BSY have become the foundation for the propagation and development of the Satyananda system of yoga throughout the world. The result is that today every society knows about yoga. If nothing else, they know of asana and pranayama and are aware that they are beneficial. People all over have become aware of the concept of yoga.

The other development that has taken place is that the number of yoga teachers has increased. Thirty years ago, there were very few yoga teachers who would go from city to city to teach yoga. Now every city and town has hundreds of yoga teachers. However, all these teachers only stress on asana, pranayama and hatha yoga. Among a hundred yoga teachers,



perhaps ten might teach a few aspects of raja yoga, jnana yoga or bhakti yoga. This is not a complete education of yoga. When no one knew about yoga, the yoga classes were general classes. That was yoga propagation, not yoga practice.

Yoga practice is when one comes to the ashram and understands, learns, practises and realizes in-depth to experience the teaching. In yoga practice, by staying within a discipline, there is development of awareness, knowledge of what is happening all around, and the establishment of a connection between body and mind, through which one’s potential is realized. That is the foundation for acquiring excellence in yoga practice. We have propagated yoga as well as provided the opportunities for yoga practice. However, the end of yoga is not yoga practice. Yoga must become a lifestyle.

In yoga practice, yoga becomes the medium to establish union between body and mind. When you wish to experience yoga as a lifestyle, remove yoga from the body-mind aspect and connect it with *karma* and *bhavana*, action and feeling. The body-mind connection is all right till the stage of yoga practice, but in yogic lifestyle, yoga relates to the harmony of head, heart and hands.

People go to an institute and practise yoga for one or two hours a week. They allocate a separate time for that – whether once or five times a week. However, this does not bring about a relaxation in the thoughts, behaviour, habits or the level of stress. While yoga is practised, it feels good – physically and mentally, and the moment we come out of the class, we revert to our old patterns. This is true of every yoga practitioner. However, when a yogic lifestyle is lived, we connect and apply the yogic precepts to the different situations of life. For example, one can practise pranayama in the office toilet to de-stress or re-energize oneself. It is not necessary to practise pranayama only at six in the morning. The purpose of pranayama is to increase prana shakti, so one can practise it whenever there is a lack of energy. One may do one’s practice in the morning, but one should not limit the practice to that period. One should be able to practise yoga whenever there is a need. That is integration of yoga with lifestyle.

One may practise yoga nidra on returning from office, when one is mentally fatigued, the nervous system is taut, or there is anxiety and stress. This is how thoughts are transformed and habits are changed. We are not able to get rid of our negative, limiting conditions, as the mind is weak. It is necessary to develop the strength of mind to carry out a resolve. There are many yogic methods for that, such as yama and niyama. If these are assimilated in our daily routine, then our life becomes effulgent with yoga, and we can remain stress-free and energized all the time.

Yogic lifestyle is a stage different from yoga practice. And after yogic lifestyle comes yogic culture. That is the sequence of the growth of yoga.

In its new chapter, BSY will continue the development of yoga to take it from stage to stage. The work that is being undertaken at present is also towards such an aim. Just as in the past, the hidden and unknown practices of yoga were made available through the teachings of Swami Satyananda, the work will continue to develop and grow, and a holistic understanding of the yogic science will continue to evolve. ॐ



January

On 11th January, havan was performed on the occasion of Swami Niranjan's thirty-seventh sannyasa day. Swamiji gave satsang on the significance of sannyasa and initiated aspirants into mantra, jignasu and karma sannyasa.

On 20th January, students of the four-month Yogic Studies course received their certificates. Ninety-one students from 29 countries participated in the course.

February

Basant Panchami, the foundation day of Bihar School of Yoga and the beginning of spring, was observed at Ganga Darshan with a three-day sadhana shivir from 9th to 11th February in which over 300 people participated. Havans were performed by BYMM children to invoke Saraswati, the deity of knowledge. On the 11th, Basant Panchami day, Swami Niranjan handed over the Presidency of Bihar School of Yoga to Swami Suryaprakash.

On 14th February, Bal Yoga Diwas (Children's Yoga Day) was celebrated at Ganga Darshan with presentations by the children of Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal. The program included asana, dance and

karate displays. The children also conducted havan, sang bhajans and explained the work being done by BYMM.

From 1st to 29th February, a program based on the koshas was conducted by Swami Yogakanti for 24 women teachers and devotees from Iran.

From 21st to 24th February, Swamiji presided over the Lucknow Yoga Mahotsav, organized by Yoga Anusandhan Sansthan, Lucknow. On 22nd February, he addressed a gathering of 1,000 children at MR Jaipuria School as well as students of Lucknow University. On the 24th, he gave satsang on 'Graceful Living through Yoga' to a gathering of judges, police and administrative officers, entrepreneurs and professionals.

Swamiji was in Patna on 28th February and gave satsang to a gathering of 400 people at the Rajendra Smriti Sanghralaya, a museum dedicated to the first President of India, on the significance of yoga in human evolution. He also spoke at the L.N. Mishra Institute of Business Management on the yogic perspective on management.

The program was organized by Satyananda Yoga Kendra, Patna. Dr Swami Nirmalananda was in Chennai from 18th to 23rd February at the behest of Satyananda Yoga Education Charitable Trust, Chennai. From 18th to 20th February, she conducted a workshop at Madhuram Narayan Centre, an early intervention centre for mentally challenged children. From 19th to 22nd February, she gave lectures on yoga therapy, and on 23rd February conducted a yoga retreat.

From 26th February to 4th March, Shiva Purana Katha was held at Baidyanatheshwar Shankarbagh (Shivalaya), Munger, in the presence of Swami Niranjan, under the auspices of the Shri Magniram Baijnath Goenka Charitable Trust. Swami Govindadev Giri from Pune narrated the Shiva Purana *kathas* (stories). The event was coordinated by Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal (BYMM). On the final day, Baba Ramdev graced the event as guest of honour and also visited Ganga Darshan. On 4th March, poornahuti was held and all participants performed *abhisheka*, ceremonial bathing, of Shiva and Parvati, who were then installed in the temple.



2008: Year of Transition

From the Second Generation to the Third

The year 2008 has marked an important phase in the yoga mission of Swami Satyananda. Swami Suryaprakash Saraswati assumed the office of Presidency of Bihar School of Yoga on Basant Panchami, the 11th of February 2008, after Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati, just as Swami Niranjanananda became the President of Bihar School of Yoga in 1983 after Swami Satyananda.

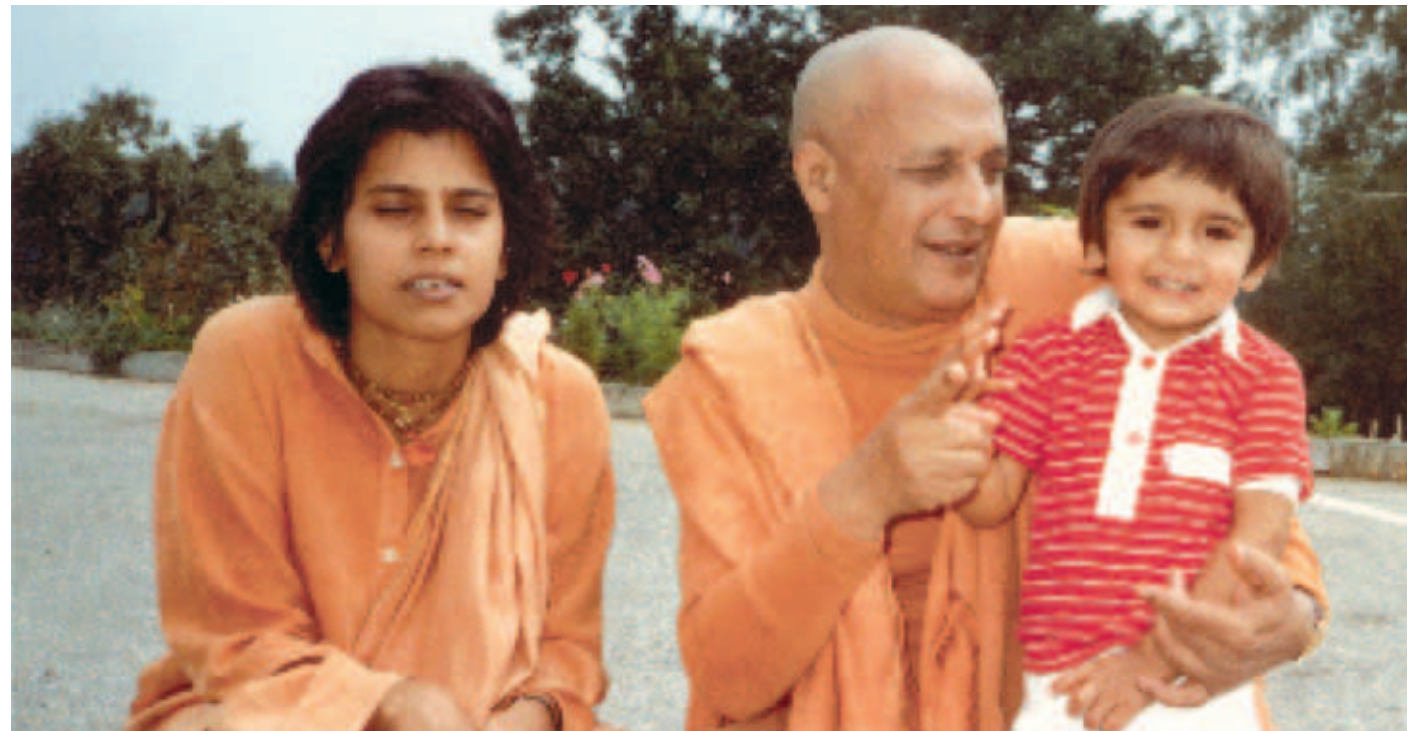
The coming of Swami Suryaprakash to the Presidency of Bihar School of Yoga was foreseen by Swami Satyananda and Swami Niranjan when Swami Suryaprakash was of a tender age. Swami Suryaprakash was born on 1st of August 1982 in San Francisco (USA) to Indian parents and raised in an environment

that encouraged a deep sense of spiritual commitment. Born in the United States, educated in Europe, now in India, Swami Suryaprakash is fluent in English and Spanish and has a flair for many languages including Catalan, French, Italian, Greek and now Hindi and Sanskrit.

His grandparents, Siru and Savitri Nainani came to India from Sindh at the time of partition, and settled in Ranchi (India) where they met Swami Satyananda and later travelled to France and settled in Spain. His mother Kamal and father Jivat Mukhi, aunt Shaku and sister Sanyam are dedicated disciples of Swami Satyananda. On his frequent travels to Europe, Swami Satyananda would stay in their home whenever he visited

Spain. No matter which part of Europe Swami Satyananda was visiting, his food was cooked at their home and flown to Sri Swamiji. His aunt Shaku Nainani, was married to Cristobal during the Sita Kalyanam ceremony in the year 1999. In fact, you may say that the entire family is part and parcel of Swami Satyananda's mission.

Swami Suryaprakash's birth took place with the blessings of Swami Satyananda when Swami Niranjan was touring in the USA and was a frequent visitor to his home. So, it was not a surprise that in 1999, after completing his education in the USA and Spain, Swami Suryaprakash joined the ashram permanently to serve in the guru's mission. On 14th January





2000, he was initiated into Dashnami sannyasa by Swami Niranjan. From that time he has been undergoing intense training in ashram and spiritual life in order to prepare himself for further responsibilities.

Swami Suryaprakash oversees the management of ashram activities and is a shining example of unswerving commitment to the guru's mission. A disciple should be able to follow every command of his guru, verbal or otherwise. He should be able to anticipate and remain constantly alert to every need of the guru. Only then can the guru transmit his knowledge and guidance to the disciple and continue his mission through him. Swami Suryaprakash has the high ideals and standards of such a disciple.

Swami Satyananda has often mentioned that it is necessary for the head of an institution to step down and install the next head elected during his lifetime, so that the succeeding person may be able to master the work thoroughly. This is especially relevant in a sannyasa institution, where nothing belongs to any particular individual. Often jivanmuktas, liberated beings, who have functioned dynamically during their lifetime, have been unable to leave behind disciples of adequate knowledge, experience and strength to continue their mission.

The inability of spiritual or temporal leaders to step down while living has been instrumental in the downfall of many institutions. Therefore, it is very important to give the

responsibility of leadership and administration to others while the master is still living and thus able to guide and inspire them. This decision to pass over the responsibility must be taken at the correct time, when it is neither too early nor too late.

Swami Niranjan has been the President of Bihar School of Yoga for 25 years, and has played the dual role of guru and administrator with remarkable skill. He has inspired, instructed and been the guiding light for thousands of yoga aspirants and devotees world-wide. His decisions as an administrator have been flawless and his guidance to the people illuminating. In 2008, Swami Niranjan reached a turning point in his life and retired as an administrator



although he will continue to guide and inspire the people for as long as he lives.

The yoga mission has a definite purpose and vision for the greater benefit and upliftment of humanity, which should be felt not only in this generation, but for many generations to come. The yogic culture, way of life, philosophy and practices must not become extinct or adulterated with the ravages of time or restricted to only a limited sector of people. Rather, the mission must diversify and spread the systems of yoga to all corners of the world to elevate every sphere of life. For the continuous and harmonious flow of these resolves, a strong foundation and external support for the yoga mission are required.

Swami Niranjana will continue to reside in Ganga Darshan for a specific time to guide and ensure the transition of the yoga mission from the second to the third generation, before moving on his destined path. The vast numbers of well-wishers, devotees and disciples of Bihar School of Yoga have always extended their help to the mission in every way possible. The future will be strengthened by the continuation of their support. Now that Swami Niranjana is no longer at the helm of administration, his scope and range of spiritual inspiration will increase considerably. In the words of his guru, he will further the command to take yoga from 'door to door and from shore to shore'.

*Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati
for Bihar School of Yoga*



Swamī Satyasangananda Saraswatī

Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati, popularly known as Swami Satsangi, was born in 1953, in the small town of Chandernagore, West Bengal, India. Although from childhood she had a completely modern education and upbringing, she opted for the traditional life of renunciation and sannyasa after she had a series of inner awakenings at an early age, which led her to her guru, Swami Satyananda Saraswati. She was initiated into the Dashnami tradition of sannyasa on 6 July 1982 at Ganga Darshan, Munger.

Thereafter she travelled extensively and ceaselessly with Swami Satyananda on his tours in India and abroad, which gave her immense exposure and contributed to her development into a scholar with deep insight into the yogic and tantric traditions as well as modern sciences and philosophies. A truly inspirational teacher and gifted writer, Swami Satsangi is the author of major texts on yoga and tantra, such as *Sri Vijnana Bhairava Tantra: The Ascent, Karma Sannyasa, Light on the Guru and Disciple Relationship* and her latest, *The Descent*, a commentary on Adi Guru Shankaracharya's famous poem of divine ecstasy, *Sri Saundarya Lahari*. One of her most acclaimed books, *Tattwa Shuddhi: The Tantric Science of Inner Purification*, outlines an essential practice for inner experience which she herself developed and presented. Her ability to articulate ancient teachings from yogic, tantric and vedic texts and bring these into a modern context makes Swami Satsangi an ideal teacher to transmit the wisdom of her guru's teachings.

In 1989, when her guru Swami Satyananda, ordained by an inner mandate he received in meditation, went to live in seclusion at a remote rural village in Jharkhand known as Rikhia, Swami Satyasangananda was the person who located the place he saw in his vision and negotiated the purchase of the land, which was to become the tapobhoomi of Swami Satyananda. At that time Rikhia was a poor, nondescript, unknown village in one of India's poorest states. No roads, no electricity, no phones, no shops, no traffic, no trace of the 21st century, that was the Rikhia she entered in 1989, to prepare for the arrival of her guru.



Since that time Swami Satsangi has dedicated herself to fulfilling her guru's vision of uplifting the neglected, impoverished and downtrodden villagers in the surrounding areas of the ashram, by implementing the cardinal teachings of Paramguru Swami Sivananda: Serve, Love, Give. Her tireless and unceasing efforts, which are carried out under the banner of Sivananda Math, an institution founded by Swami Satyananda in 1987 at Munger in memory of his guru, have transformed the entire area into a vibrant centre of spirituality where people throng in large numbers for spiritual solace. On

January 1st 2007, she was appointed as the Peethadhishwari of Rikhiapeeth by Swami Satyananda. Presently she resides at Rikhia, the place where Swami Satyananda now lives, and is fully committed to the material and spiritual upliftment of the local community, who are the neighbours of her guru. She is also the registrar of Bihar Yoga Bharati and honorary secretary of Bihar School of Yoga.

Rikhiapeeth is the tapobhoomi (sadhana place) of Swami Satyananda where he continues to perform higher vedic sadhanas. A modern day gurukul, Rikhiapeeth aims



to disseminate ancient spiritual knowledge as propagated by the vedic lineage of rishis in the Vedas, Upanishads and Puranas, to all regardless of caste, creed, nationality, religion and gender. Rikhiapeeth also offers householders from all walks of life the opportunity to experience ashram life and the joys of living in the spirit of renunciation, selfless service and samarpan. Summer holiday camps for children from all parts of India are also held as well as spiritual sadhana camps for sadhakas and devotees to help them progress in their spiritual endeavours. Apart from

seva, satsang and swadhyaya, they are also taught the methods to attain a healthy body, peace of mind, and awakening of their higher potential. Swami Satsangi directs the activities of Sivananda Math and Sivananda Ashram from Rikhiapeeth.

Sivananda Math in Rikhia is the creation of Swami Satsangi. Sivananda Math's activities include providing economic and social assistance to the underprivileged as well as self-employment opportunities and promoting self-sufficiency. It also conducts programs for the spiritual upliftment of all present, especially the villagers of Rikhia. Under Swami Satsangi's direction,



Sivananda Math has enjoyed continued expansion and success and now reaches over 30,000 families from 160 villages.

An important project is educating and empowering the young girls (kanyas) and boys (batuks) of Rikhia, from the most backward and underprivileged communities, who learn Sanskrit chanting, yoga, kirtan, English and computer skills, thus imbibing the spiritual culture of India as well as receiving modern education. The aim is to provide a much needed strong foundation for youth to whom the future belongs. Today, under her guidance, the kanyas and batuks play an integral role as hosts of all the activities and programs held at Rikhia, conducting themselves with confidence and self-assurance.



In 2004, inspired by her guru's sankalpa to help and love his neighbours like his own self, she founded Sivananda Ashram, which cares for the deprived and largely ignored elderly and infirm so that they may live with dignity and respect. It also undertakes the upkeep and maintenance of widows, treated as outcasts in society. The ashram is also undertaking the mammoth task of feeding over 2,000 children and aged people one meal every day so that in time they overcome the effects of malnutrition and inadequate food.



Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati for Bihar School of Yoga

One day a guru set out from his ashram with a few of his disciples. As they reached the marketplace the guru went into the local bar where wine and liquor was served and ordered a drink for himself. The disciples nodded to each other and happily ordered drinks for themselves, expressing the logic that if Guruji is drinking then, as true disciples, they too must follow him. After that Guruji stopped at a prostitute's den and the disciples were happy to follow in their beloved guru's footsteps. After all, to follow the guru in thought, word and deed was the dharma of a disciple, they reasoned. Guru said nothing and allowed them to do as they pleased. Then, coming out from the brothel, Guruji stopped at a factory where they were melting glass in acid. Picking up a glass and pouring some of that deadly concoction into it, the guru simply drank it down with the same ease as he had drunk the wine. The disciples stood aghast, looking at one another in horror. All except one desisted from drinking the melted glass saying, "Guruji is a siddha, he can easily digest it. We are ordinary, we will die." All except one, who asked for a glass of that poisonous liquid and drank it, not at all worried about the consequences. That disciple alone, out of the group of disciples, was fit to be called a disciple worthy of receiving the guru's grace in full measure.

A true disciple

We always dream and aspire for guru's grace, but there has to be *paatrata*, or qualification, in order to receive it. Only an empty vessel can receive the rain which drops down from the heavens. A full vessel or one with holes will spill over. The first qualification of the disciple is that he has to become empty. This does not mean that he becomes a vegetable, a dunce or a dullard. On the contrary, to empty oneself, to unlearn everything, one requires tremendous courage, conviction, determination, unswerving faith, belief, trust and an elevated awareness. A true disciple is one in whom these qualities are inborn; he does not have to cultivate these qualities or try to be like that, he just is like that.

Extremely rare to find is a true guru and just as rare to find, if not more so, is a true disciple. In spiritual life it is discipleship that is important, not gurudom. A true disciple is one in whom the spirit

of surrender has blossomed. He breathes and lives in communion with his guru to whom he has surrendered. They are then like two bodies with one *atman* or soul. To encounter such a duo in one's lifetime is a precious opportunity, for such a guru and disciple are destined for each other. They epitomize the sacred and ancient *guru-shishya sambandh*, or guru-disciple relationship.

It is easy to become anything in this world: a doctor, a lawyer, a scientist, a businessman, a politician, an engineer, a teacher. These are accomplishments and achievements that are applauded by society. But there is an accomplishment that is not just applauded, but also revered by society, and that is to become a *shishya* or disciple, in the true sense of the word. This is truly the most difficult attainment that any human can aspire for.

Discipleship requires self-discipline, surrender, dedication, sincerity, humility, egolessness and, most difficult of all, to be in



total communion with the spiritual frequencies of guru. In other words, to be a disciple you have to live with higher awareness. You have to raise your awareness to that of guru's so that you can follow the guru in thought, word and deed. Whether awake or asleep, near guru or millions of miles away, the thought frequencies of guru should reach you.

Such a disciple becomes an effective medium of the guru's knowledge and can transmit the guru's energy to all. This is not easy because, for that, the disciple has no individuality of his own, he ceases to exist; he becomes an instrument and the guru operates through him.

Of course there have been many great people in this world, geniuses of every kind who have excelled in science, music, art, dance, education. There have been many intellectual giants and heroes in sports, games and entertainment. Each of them

have had special episodes in their life which perhaps make good storytelling. However, that is not the purpose of this essay, nor is this essay to glorify the life of anyone.

The purpose of these words is just one, and that is to convey the essence of *shishyatwa*, or discipleship, which Swami Niranjana embodies, which is the most important quality for self-evolution. If one can become a shishya in the true sense of the word, then one does not need any other ingredient for evolution. Even if you do not practise yoga it does not matter; the evolution will gain momentum and move at a very fast pace and you can accomplish anything, even self-realization here and now.

Fusion with guru

The famous story of Milarepa is a touching narrative about such a disciple. His surrender to guru was not intellectual, it was natural and spontaneous. The story is too long to retell here,

but suffice it to say that due to this innate surrender, a fusion took place between guru and disciple, and the guru's grace automatically flowed to him, giving him the transcendental experience of enlightenment.

Milarepa was an ordinary uneducated boy, but he had the special ability to live in total awareness of guru. Mind you, Milarepa's guru was not loving and kind as we imagine the guru should be in dealing with us. Milarepa's guru used to abuse, scold, kick and beat him day and night for each and every little thing. But when the guru realized that the disciple's surrender had become complete, he gave Milarepa a kick off the top of the cliff, where he was day and night toiling to build a new home for his guru as per the guru's command, carrying heavy stones from down below. As the guru kicked Milarepa and he began to fall down into the precipice below, which meant certain death, he became light like the clouds and began to float; he was totally transformed into a realized being.

Swami Niranjana lived with Swami Satyananda for just four years, from 1967 to 1971, after which he left Munger for Europe. After that, although they met several times at different destinations, including Munger, they never really lived together. Yet their contact has been total, as his life has been shaped entirely by his guru. This itself points to the fact that although he lived and moved thousands of miles away, his heart and soul remained with his guru at all times and he never bartered them to anyone else.

One cannot give one's heart, soul and mind to guru and then begin to use them for oneself. No, that is not surrender. That is a sham and hypocrisy. Many people become disciples and express undying faith in guru, but it hardly takes them a minute to abandon guru in the face of difficulty. Swami Niranjana must have faced difficulties of every kind just like anyone else, but he did not compromise himself in the face of them and remained undaunted in his discipleship.

Swami Niranjana has never been to school, college or university. In modern jargon you would say that he is uneducated and illiterate. He is no intellectual giant, but he too, like Milarepa,





has blossomed because the fusion has taken place between him and his guru. It is this quality which sets him apart from others, and which will take him to great heights of success. It is this ability which endears him to others and attracts others to him – the magnetism of guru shines through him as he has emptied himself.

Surrender of ego

To be a disciple you have to become empty and transparent, not remain full and opaque. Fullness and opacity do not allow the light of guru to glisten and glow through you to others. The biggest obstacle and barrier in this is the ego.

It is the hardness of ego that does not allow the disciple to become soft and supple. Very often disciples think that they are truly egoless. However, the tentacles of ego are very subtle, and even the most discerning disciple may not be aware of the presence of ego in himself. It is the guru who, through his expert skill and deftness, makes the disciple aware of the presence of ego and it is only a rare disciple who is able to effortlessly surrender that ego to guru without any difficulty. In most cases disciples try to manipulate their relationship with guru and

although pretending to surrender, they have a hard time within and begin to crack.

Surrender has to be effortless and natural through the abiding bond of love between guru and disciple. It is not something that the guru imposes, it is the disciple's own awareness that compels him. People with such awareness are rare indeed and fortunate too. When the disciple becomes hollow like a flute, then guru plays sweet music through the disciple.

Communion

One such person is Swami Satyananda, who had this type of relationship with his guru Swami Sivananda, and who says of his guru, "To think of Swami Sivananda is yoga." Such was their communion that he could always know in advance, or foretell, what Swami Sivananda was going to do, or what he was thinking, because he lived and breathed the wavelength of his guru; he was totally in tune. Then it did not matter if he lived with him or far away; he could carry the knowledge of his guru everywhere. Today, we can see the results of this.

His awareness of guru was and still is so deep that the moment Swami Sivananda left his body, Swami Satyananda had his darshan and saw him on a boat, steering the wheel towards him. He heard conches blowing and even the water of the Ganga splashed on to him. It was such a living experience that when he came out of that experience of darshan, he found that his clothes were wet. At once Swami Satyananda, who was at Ananda Bhavan in Munger at the time, knew that Swami Sivananda had entered mahasamadhi and immediately left for Rishikesh to pay his respects.

I was not so fortunate to see them together and witness the intensity of their communion, but I have seen very closely that same intensity in the relationship of Swami Niranjan with his guru, Swami Satyananda.

Destiny

From the moment I met Swami Niranjan, way back when he was still in America, I noticed this special quality in him. He is the epitome of a disciple. Each and every disciple should try to

emulate him if they want to succeed in discipleship. That is the purpose of his birth: to show to the world how a disciple should live, act, think and perform. That is the lesson he will teach to the world: how to be a disciple.

It is hard to explain this very special relationship between two persons that, although enacted at many levels, is essentially spiritual. Destiny brings the guru and disciple together. The guru enters the disciple's life to uplift him and, in some cases, the guru actually searches for the disciple towards whom destiny is beckoning. Destiny has her favourites and one of them is Swami Niranjan. For, she placed him right in the lap of his guru. Let me tell you about him.

Manas putra

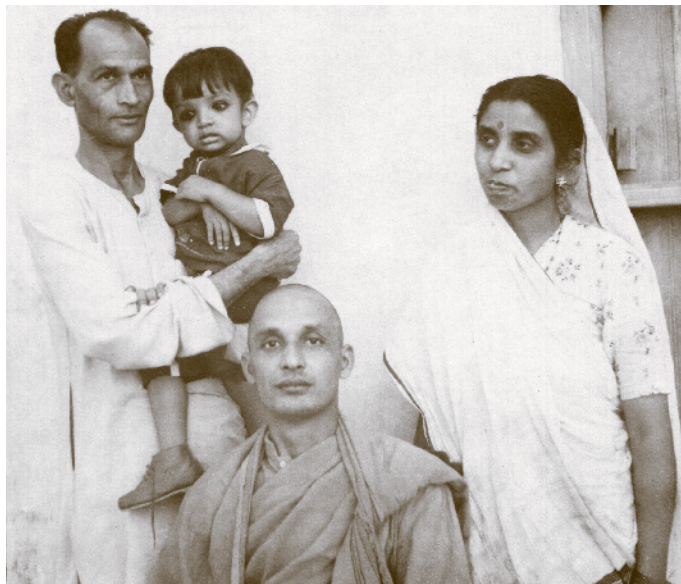
Before he was born he was a beautiful sparkling star in the sky, awaiting the call of his guru. Then one day the blessed parents of Swami Niranjan, Satyabrat and Dharmashakti, who were childless and also had been told by medical doctors that they should give up hope of ever having a child, were inspired to ask Swami Satyananda for a child; he was their guru and they were his closest disciples. So, they accompanied Swami Satyananda



to Gangotri and as he was taking a dip in the icy waters of the sacred Ganga, they approached him and asked to be blessed with a child. Swami Satyananda took a handful of Ganga water and splashed it on them, blessing them with divine and powerful vibrations. He said, “I give you a son, but you will have to return him to me.” They were overjoyed and took the vow to do so.

Gangotri, the divine abode of rishis, munis, devis and devatas, abounding in refined and pure vibrations, is the place where his parents conceived a child. That was Swami Niranjanananda, the manas putra of Swami Satyananda. His guru had called the beautiful star from the sky that had long awaited his call. Even before conception, Swami Satyananda had appointed Swami Niranjan as his successor. The year was 1959 and the place where they lived was Rajnandgaon in Madhya Pradesh.

In Swami Satyananda’s own words, “In 1959, when I went to Gangotri, Satyabrat and Dharmashakti, Niranjan’s father and mother, were with me. We were taking a bath in Gangaji when Satyabrat made a request, ‘Swamiji, the doctors have said she would never be able to conceive, please give something to Dharmashakti.’ I replied, ‘There is no child in her destiny, but there is one in mine. Yes, I



will give something to you, but you must return it.’ Dharmashakti agreed saying, ‘Yes, I will return it.’ We had the type of relationship where they always followed my instructions and it was done. So I said, ‘Okay, make a resolve that you will give that child to me and not keep it for yourself.’ So the resolve was made. If they had taken Niranjan, then he would not have survived, because Niranjan is my *manas putra*, mind-born son.

Niranjan was born and Satyabrat returned him to me. Now, tell me, was it a loss for him? Yes, there was a loss – he did not get a daughter-in-law! But, in this world there is a flood of sons and daughters-in-law. It is very difficult nowadays to even feed them. So, the fewer sons and daughters-in-law the better. Therefore, perhaps others should also take a vow just as Satyabrat and Dharmashakti did!”

‘Niranjan’

Swami Niranjan was born at 4.10 a.m. on 14th February 1960 in Rajnandgaon. Swami Satyananda came to bless the new-born boy, for the bonds between guru and disciple are strong, which was evident even at that time. Holding him close in his lap, Sri Swamiji whispered into the newborn Niranjan’s tender ears,

“Shuddhosi, buddhosi, niranjanosi,
samsaar-maya-parivarjitosi.”

Pure, enlightened, untainted, remain unaffected by maya, which is the cause of change in this ocean of samsara.

He gave him the name Niranjan, ‘the spotless, untainted one’. An apt name, for to this day – although living in the world of maya, Swami Niranjan is not tainted by it. The beautiful photographs in memory of that moment tell the entire story.

The entire family was rejoicing and bursting with happiness. A baby boy is the greatest joy any parent could hope for. Moreover, the birth of this child was surprising and unexpected, one can say nothing short of a miracle, as his mother was beyond the child bearing age. So, right from his birth, when he first entered the world, he was a hero! His early years were spent in the joy of his mother’s lap, eating, drinking and playing, just as Krishna

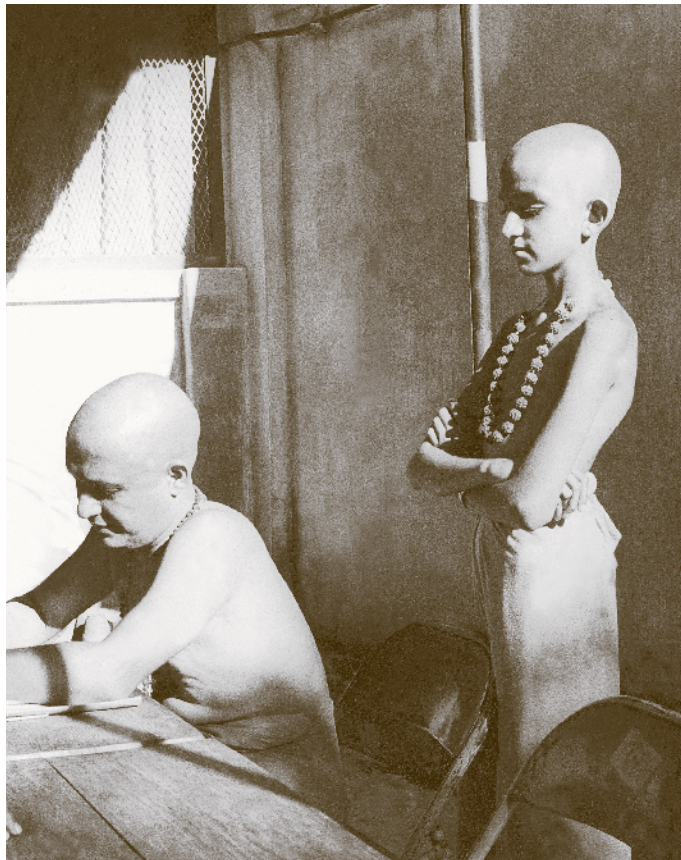


must have played in the lap of Yashoda. Whenever his parents came to the ashram at Munger to pay respects to their guru, he came with them and stayed at the dharmashala, as the ashram was very small then.

Resolve

By the age of three he had made up his mind. Imagine that! At the age of three, when other children cannot think of anything other than playing with dolls and toys, Swami Niranjan had decided that he wanted to be a sannyasin, in service of his guru.

Although his parents knew that this was the divine purpose of his birth and supported him, all his aunts and uncles who doted on him would forcibly take him back. Little Niranjan would then go on *dharna* or strike, refusing to eat or drink anything. Even



the beautiful garments they specially made for him were ripped apart at night when everyone was sleeping and he would put on the geru robe. In the morning on waking, when they would ask about the ripped clothes, he would tell them that a rat had come and torn the clothes.

Sri Swamiji tells us that Swami Niranjan came to Munger when he was four years old to take sannyasa, and was given permission to stay. But his aunt, his mother's sister, came and took him back. She wanted Niranjan to live at home, wear trousers, shirt, tie, coat, and study the ABC from an English reader like other children, so she dressed him in good clothes. But, the next morning Niranjan had torn his good clothes all to shreds. When he was asked what had happened, he replied,

"A mouse inside me has torn the clothes. The name of the mouse is sannyasa." Swami Niranjan refused to eat. Eventually his aunt brought him back and said, "Swamiji, he is the only child of his parents." Sri Swamiji said, "Then take him back. Who is stopping you? I'm not." But Swami Niranjan refused to go with her.

Guinea pig

Eventually Niranjan won and he was brought to the ashram at the age of seven. Swami Satyananda told Swami Niranjan that he did the right thing by not going to school. "I always told him that I wasted many years on useless schooling, whereas he could save those years." This decision gave Swami Niranjan a natural advantage over others as he started early and could accomplish everything at a young age.

To hear the stories about him at that early age in the ashram from Sri Swamiji is sheer joy. Being the youngest inmate of the ashram, naturally he got his way in everything. If you ask the swamis who were there at the ashram at that time, they each have a story to tell.

Sri Swamiji says, "I think his gurubhais would be better able to tell you about him in those early years. I only know that as a child, when Niranjan slept, you could remove his chowki and take him anywhere and he would not know it. He slept like a log! When he was asleep, the swamis used to take him off his chowki and carry him from one side of the ashram to the other. They were very mischievous, but not in front of me. I knew all about it, but I never considered this childish mischief to be something negative.

"To manage a child well, you must not be too attached. Think that this is a guinea pig on which to experiment, not your dear child. I experimented on Swami Niranjan. I have never displayed much emotion for him. I do not even love Niranjan, but people think that I love him. I do not know what love is; I do not understand it. Why should I love him? He was a guinea pig for my experiment. I taped the *Gita* and all the Upanishads, and I used to play them to him when he was asleep. The tape would rewind automatically and play throughout the night.

"Swami Niranjan had a problem. He used to sleep so deeply that he could be physically transported from the ashram below

to the one above along with his bed, and he would not wake up. His sleep was deep and unconscious, and there he found everything that I wanted to teach him. Swami Niranjan has never been to school. The first time he went to a school was to demonstrate asanas in Northern Ireland. However, if you speak to him on any topic he will talk to you like a teacher, as if he has read it. This is because his unconscious mind, which the shastras call *hiranyagarbha*, contains that seed."

Awakening the seed of knowledge

As a child Swami Niranjan was definitely a scientist. Later he became a swami as we all know. But right there and then he was a scientist of all sorts. He used to pull apart machines and gadgets just to get into their system and learn how they worked. He used to gaze at the stars with such earnestness that Swami Satyananda would tell him about the galaxy and the planets, which as a child would perhaps be his most memorable experience because there is something awfully inspiring in being taught or told something by one's guru.

When he first came to the ashram as a child, for many years he used to stay in the same room as Swami Satyananda. Lucky



child that he was, born with a silver spoon in his mouth, he slept in the same bed as him and, as every child does in his sleep, often he used to kick and punch a lot as well. At that time while he was sleeping, Sri Swamiji gave him sessions of yoga nidra and taught him all that he now knows and is. You can say that the grooming of Swami Niranjan by his guru took place in his sleep. Upon waking up the next morning, he would give Niranjan a book to read of what he had transmitted to him in his sleep and while reading the book little Niranjan would say, “Swamiji, I know all these things. I don’t know from where I know them or have read them, but everything I read in this book is familiar and known to me.”

Swami Satyananda has often spoken about the use of yoga nidra to awaken the seed of knowledge in an individual. Swami Niranjan is ample proof of the immense possibility of this method to educate and mould a person’s character and personality. He is a shining example for all children, for he has never been to school or college, yet his command over every topic, whether it is science, philosophy, art, culture, ethics and morality, is astounding. His fluency in several languages, which he has never formally learnt or studied, also gives proof of the opening of those centres of the brain that stimulate knowledge. Of course every child does not



get the opportunity which Swami Niranjan got, but his example should set our minds thinking on how to utilize yoga to awaken the creative potential in our children. Just a degree in school and college is not the answer to our progress in life. The awakening of the dormant centres of the brain has to take place if we are to accomplish all that we set out to do in our lives.

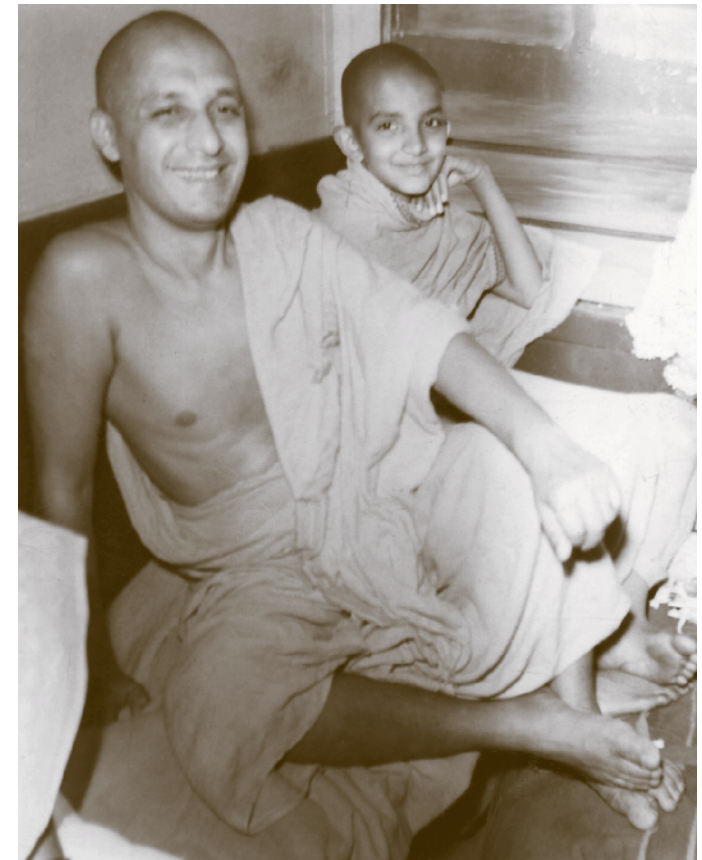
Swami Satyananda has said, “I used to teach yoga nidra to Swami Niranjan because I was doing research, not because I wanted to make him something. Gold is gold, a diamond is a diamond and iron is iron by birth. It is no use polishing iron in the hope of converting it into gold. Swami Niranjan is Swami Niranjan by birth. I did not make him Swami Niranjan. I taught him yoga nidra because I was trying to observe its effects on the subconscious mind. I was doing an experiment and it proved successful.”

Ashram playground

From 1964 until 1970, during the age from four to ten, Swami Niranjan lived in the original ashram at Munger which was built by one of Swami Satyananda’s staunchest devotee and well wishers, Mr Kedarnath Goenka. That small ashram from where Sri Swamiji launched his yoga movement was soon to become an epicentre for spiritual aspirants from the world over, but right then it was the playground of Swami Niranjan who came there to live with his guru.

In Swami Satyananda’s own words, that time is described as very special because then the ashram had very few inmates, who were all under the direct tutelage of Sri Swamiji. They used to work hard to master all that they were receiving from him. The intimacy with guru, his constant presence, was so inspiring that those childhood years of Swami Niranjan and all who were there at the time cannot ever be forgotten or erased. They are permanently etched as precious moments that now one can only relive as memories.

In the early days after his arrival at the small, simple, austere and primitive ashram at Munger, he joined the band of swamis who although young were nevertheless all older than him. At that time Swami Satyananda himself used to do all the teaching and the immensely fortunate Niranjan, along with the



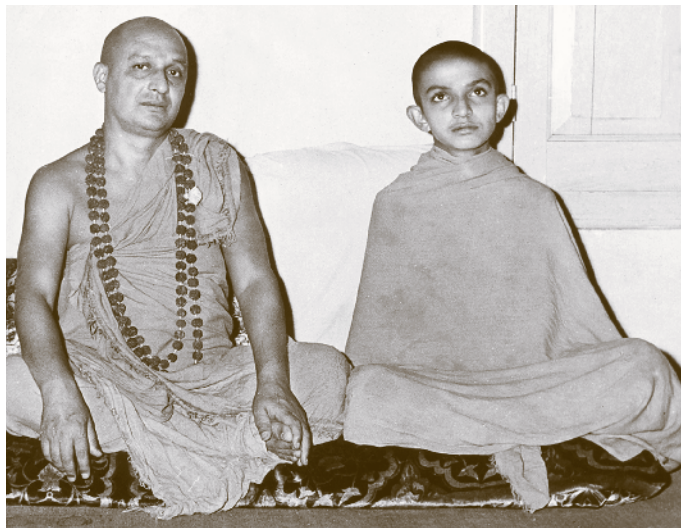
other children, learnt how to chant the *Bhagavad Gita* from Sri Swamiji. They used to have competitions as to who could memorize the chapters and verses of the *Gita*, and although they had not yet gained proficiency, they began to feel very proud of their achievements.

One day, to show off before their guru, with immense pride they went to Sri Swamiji and said they were ready to demonstrate their prowess in chanting the *Bhagavad Gita*. The first chapter went off well, but when they got to the second chapter they made a mistake. Of course, making a mistake for these novices was not an issue, but the pride they had developed even without gaining proficiency had to be emphasized. So in order to teach them a lesson in humility which they would never forget, Sri Swamiji told

them to stand on one leg and chant the entire *Gita*. So they stood on one leg, chanting the *Bhagavad Gita*, and quite naturally the entire system, including the bladders, was bursting by the time the chanting was complete and Sri Swamiji released them. Little Niranjan ran to the bathroom and stood there for about half an hour. When he came out, Sri Swamiji was smiling and said, "That's how many litres of toxins have come out of the body." That beaming smile of Sri Swamiji was enough to take away all the agony that he had borne and to make him value the lesson – pride and conceit diminish the impact of your accomplishments.

Live like a begger

In February 1971, Swami Satyananda was in Kolkata preparing to go to London for a program and then on to Belfast. Swami Niranjan was in Munger at the time, and after organizing his passport and ticket, Sri Swamiji called the in-charge of the ashram, and said, "Send Niranjan along with somebody to Kolkata tonight so he can catch the flight with me to Delhi and onwards." So the ticket was purchased by the in-charge of the ashram and Swami Niranjan left Munger by the night train to go to Kolkata, along with another sannyasi. They were given 50 rupees for their expenses, which was a lot in those days, and as they sat in the train little Niranjan had a desire to eat peanuts. When asked to buy some, the swami accompanying him purchased



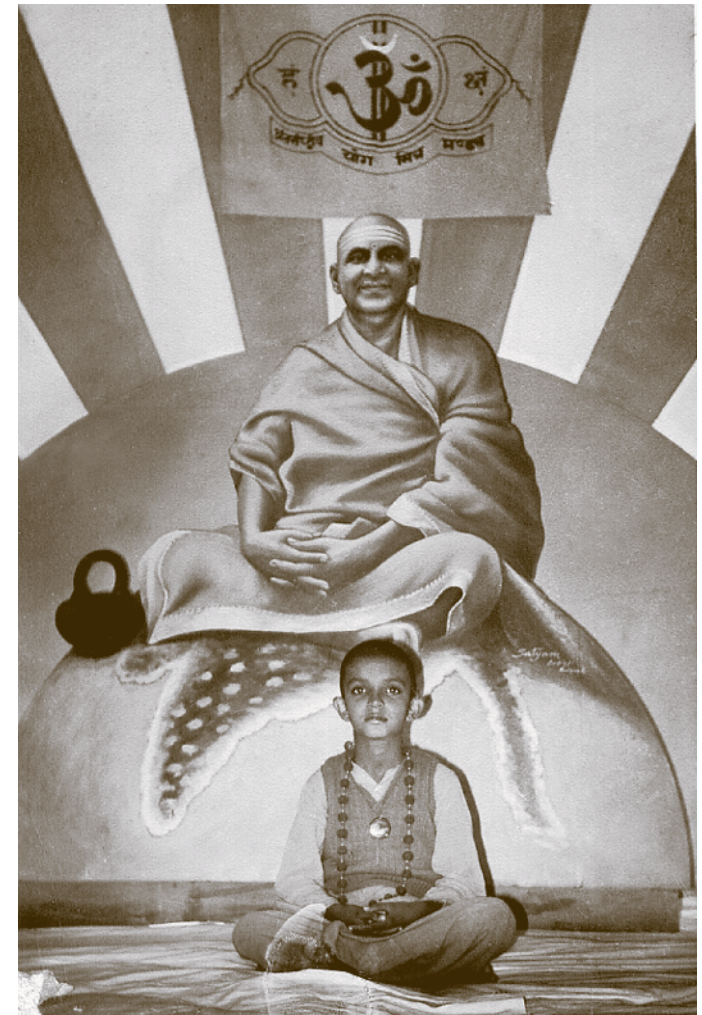
10 rupees worth of peanuts. That was not a lot by today's standards, but 10 rupees in those days for a swami was like a fortune. And so the two traveled to Kolkata, enjoying their peanuts and sleeping.

When they arrived at the station in the morning, they saw Sri Swamiji waiting for them on the platform. After they did their pranams, Sri Swamiji asked them about their journey and told them that first of all they must hand over their account, which is the rule of the ashram even to this day. On returning from a tour every sannyasin has to first give their account to the office and then he is free to go to his room, bathe and rest. The accompanying swami handed Swami Satyananda 40 rupees. Sri Swamiji asked, "What happened to the remaining money?" The other swami explained that they had eaten 10 rupees worth of peanuts along the way because it was Niranjan's desire. Sri Swamiji looked at little Niranjan and said, "Niranjan, even if a sannyasi has money, he should always live like a beggar, because the money of a sannyasi is not his to spend. It is given for another purpose. He is not the owner of the money, he is the trustee of the money and therefore cannot spend it on himself. Therefore, even if you have money, always live like a beggar." That teaching made a strong impact on Swami Niranjan and this valuable lesson contributed to the blossoming of sannyasa samskaras, or qualities, within him which are responsible for what he is today.

A sannyasin does not own or possess anything. He lives life without a feeling of ownership or doership. "*Na aham karta, guru karta, guru karta hi kevalam*" is his motto. Renunciation or *tyaga* and detachment or *vairagya* are the pillars of sannyasa. Wealth, loved ones, status, name and fame are the basis of his outer renunciation, but more significant is the renunciation of one's physical and mental strengths. In other words, a true sannyasin lives with the feeling that all he possesses, his physical strength, his mind, intellect and emotions are not for personal gain or fulfilment. They are to be used by the Divine Will for a higher purpose.

Gurutwa

At the age of eleven, Swami Niranjan accompanied Swami Satyananda on his tour of Europe. Never having set foot out of the ashram, as he stepped into the five star Hotel Ashoka in New Delhi, he could not stop staring at himself as he looked into a six foot mirror in the room, and examined himself from every angle.



As they transited in the Middle East, Swami Niranjan almost locked horns with a co-traveller on the existence of God. Sri Swamiji, who had left him seated there, on his return had to bail him out by easing the situation. At that early age too, Swami Niranjan had definite views and beliefs which carried an innate wisdom beyond his years. Although mischievous and playful, that did not in any way lessen the gravity and *gurutwa* that was manifesting in him through the power of his guru.

Gurutwa is the quality of gravity. Ironically, as the disciple makes himself hollow like a flute, transparent like crystal, light as a floating cloud and empty, instead of disintegrating and dissipating and having no character or personality, the disciple begins to acquire a gravity that makes him a heavy-weight in the eyes of others. Gurutwa is a state of evolution. One does not merely attain it by getting a certificate or degree, or by proclaiming that one has attained it. One has to evolve to that level, and the person who attains it is one who is destined for it.



Childhood in London

It was night when they landed in London and when they arrived at the home of the host, Niranjan was so tired from the long journey that he went straight to sleep. In those days, air travel was by propeller planes and he was flying from Delhi to London for the first time in his life. They travelled with the sun and the day was 14 hours long – naturally he was exhausted.

When he woke up the next morning, it had snowed and he did not know what snow was. Everything was covered in white. The houses, trees, roads, flowers, and fruits in the garden were

all white. Niranjan ran to Sri Swamiji and said, “Swamiji, what kind of a peculiar place is this? Everything is white when I look out of the window. The houses are all white, the roads are all white, the trees are all white, the leaves, flowers, fruits are all white and even people here are white. What kind of a country is this? There is no colour.”

Swami Niranjan spent his joyous childhood in London at the home of Swami Pragyamurti at 70 Thurleigh Road. There were lots of children around at that time and they used to play and play, and their observation was that Swami Niranjan exuded joy all the time and anyone in his company always felt uplifted and experienced inner joy. Even though there were fights, as children always get into squabbles, Swami Niranjan never got entangled in them. On the other hand, he always smoothed out the ragged ends and had everyone smiling and laughing again. In Swami Pragyamurti’s words, who to this day calls him her Prince Charming, “He was a chit chor like Krishna, naughty and mischievous to the hilt, but an adept at winning the hearts of all.”

A little known fact is that during this period, when he was in London, he used to sing and dance like any other child his age would. People noticed that he exhibited an inborn sense of rhythm, as he had no formal training in music and dance, and he, along with some other of his mates, were chosen to dance at the BBC centre with the Jackson Five kids, who we all know were the band from which Michael Jackson began his stupendous career at the age of five. They were more or less the same age, and in retrospect when we see the different ways their lives evolved, each a genius in his own field: Michael Jackson, one of the cultural DNA’s of this century and Swami Niranjan one of the spiritual DNA’s of this century. That dance must have been a show stopper!

Restraint

Even at a young age, when children usually go wild fulfilling all their desires, Swami Niranjan always showed wisdom and self-restraint in his actions. In 1976, at the age of sixteen he travelled from Bogotá in South America to Australia to participate in the World Yoga Convention in Sydney, over which Swami Satyananda

was presiding. As he was leaving Bogotá, people gave him donations to deliver to Sri Swamiji, which he packed away, then got on the plane and began his journey.

The route of the flight was from Bogotá to Chile, Chile to French Polynesia and finally from French Polynesia to Australia. As the plane landed in Papiti, French Polynesia, a huge storm broke out. In those days propeller planes were used, so take off was delayed by three days. Everyone who had the means went to a hotel and the airline provided them with coupons. But, since he was on a cheap ticket, the airline would not provide Swami Niranjan with any accommodation. So for three days and two nights he stayed in the transit lounge of Papiti airport, drinking only water and tea.

When he arrived in Australia and handed the Colombian donations to Swami Satyananda, and told him the story of his travels, Sri Swamiji said to him, “You had the money, so why didn’t you use it?” He answered, “The money was given to me by the devotees of Colombia to give to you. I was only the postman and therefore I had no right to use even a single cent of that money.” You cannot find this kind of restraint in many children. In fact, kids think that it is their birthright to spend the money which their fathers have earned, and when denied that right, they quarrel with their parents and even run away from home. The father’s hard-earned money is squandered away, without the least inhibition or remorse.



The light of wisdom

At the ever so young age of eleven, when most children are busy with toys and enjoyable pastimes, Swami Niranjan was giving discourses and teaching the highly evolved techniques of yoga such as hatha yoga, raja yoga and sadhanas such as prana vidya. It did make a sight straight out of the upanishads, which describe a young renunciate showing the light of knowledge to seekers more than thrice his age.

In Ireland he was a hot favourite of the Catholics as well as the Protestants. Although they hated each other, both groups loved Swami Niranjan. When he went to the Protestant side of the town to teach yoga, the Catholics used to boo him, and when he went to the Catholics to teach yoga, the Protestants used to boo him. In the morning when he woke up he would see written on the glass of his windows 'YOGI BEAR HAS NO HAIR LIVES IN HERE'.

In that strife-torn Ireland, Swami Niranjan became an icon of neutrality between two warring sides. With deftness and skill he managed to befriend both sides with love, care and affection. Wisdom has to reflect in our speech, behaviour, thoughts and action, which even as a child he naturally possessed. Only saints and sages have this unique ability through which they can make each and everyone their friend. It is tolerance that gives them that power, as tolerance leads to endurance and they are able to endure each and everything with perfect ease and comfort.



Tolerance

When Swami Satyananda endured the five fires, he accomplished this most difficult feat with an ease, such that any person would believe that it was the most easy sadhana to perform. Never was there discomfort, complaint or irritation. It seemed that his guru bestowed on him this unique quality, for tolerance was behind his effortless behaviour.

We try to be tolerant, and do so with great effort and struggle when we are in difficult situations. But effortless tolerance is possible only for those with immense courage and equanimity. It is not weak to be tolerant, as is often surmised. A tolerant person is a principled person, as we see in the case of Mahatma Gandhi who displayed the height of tolerance.

Tolerance is also the secret of survival, and at that young age, in a completely alien culture and environment of the western world which was highly articulate, intellectual and progressive with a scientific bent of mind, Swami Niranjan was able to survive very well. He impressed all who he came in touch with through the maturity of his knowledge and insight into their needs and problems.

Inherent knowledge

In 1972, at the age of twelve, he had his first confrontation with the medical fraternity in London. The day before the lecture he found himself wondering what he would say. That night in a dream he saw himself giving the lecture. On waking, he noted down all the points that he had spoken of in the dream. After the lecture, the doctors asked him if he had ever studied medicine or science. They were surprised to hear that this young boy had never sat in a classroom or been to a school, so the question of studying medicine did not arise. Yet he spoke to the doctors of bio-feedback, a subject which was at that time still in its fledgling state, and which most did not even know of. They were taken aback at his in-depth knowledge of highly technical systems such as ECG, EEG, GSR, EMG and related topics. He said, "Yes, I have spoken about the subjects and thoughts that my guru speaks of and conveys. I had no prior knowledge of these subjects nor had I studied them. I attribute that knowledge to the information given

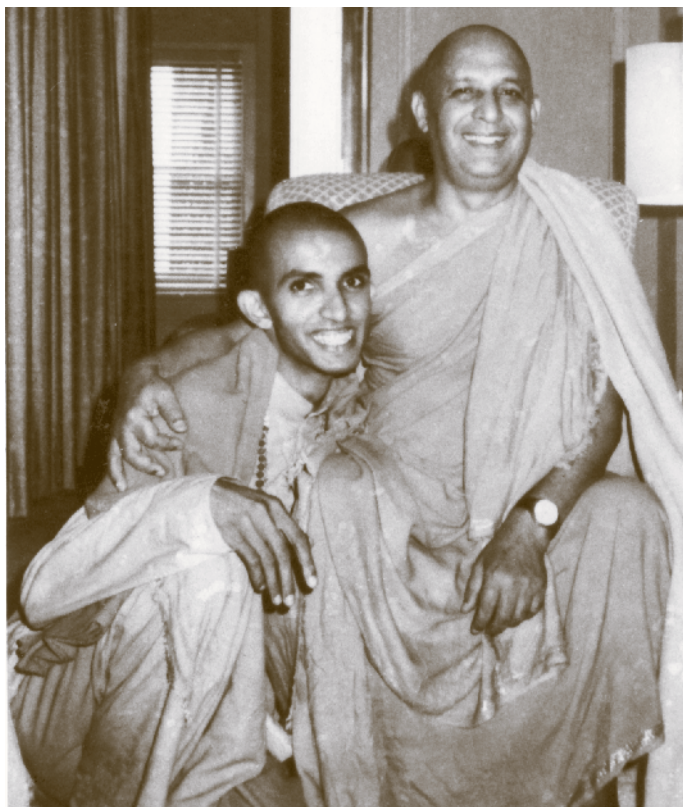


to my subconscious mind in yoga nidra by my guru. When the time was right, the information surfaced."

Whether it was yoga nidra or the expert hand of guru in educating him, in the real sense of the word Swami Niranjan is a true example of the fact that knowledge is inherent in us. We have only to unfold it from within. We do not have to borrow anything from outside. The knowledge of the entire universe already exists in us and instead of uncovering it, we do not allow it to unfold.

Sannyasa

Swami Niranjan's succession was a decision which Swami Satyananda had resolved even before he was born. In fact, it can be said that he was born for this purpose. It was no wonder then that, right from the tender age of four, he was adamant about becoming a sannyasin. Although Swami Satyananda never



imposed the idea of sannyasa, ashram and service to guru on Niranjana, this little boy could think of nothing else.

At the age of eleven, on 11th January 1971, he was initiated into sannyasa by Swami Satyananda, in Munger. Soon after that he was sent abroad, where he lived and learnt without any support from the ashram or Sri Swamiji. Just as in Sparta, where a new born child is left outside the whole night to test his strength and only if he survives the night is he taken in the next morning, in true Spartan spirit Swami Niranjana was left amidst strangers, to develop the instincts of survival in a land and culture that was totally alien to him. His tall figure which we see now is living proof of his survival.

In the 70s, communication and travel was not as it is now. Then, going abroad meant a total cut-off from your home and loved ones. Letters took so long to reach and phone calls were so

expensive and rare. One could not even think of the frequency of travel as it is done now, where people trot all over the globe, spend a few days here and there and then return. Swami Satyananda's letters to him were few rather than frequent, mostly to communicate to him about happenings related to his family, as little Niranjana had left his hearth and home and bravely set out on his guru's mission, without ever looking back.

In 1972 Swami Satyananda made a call to him in Belfast to inform him that his father had passed away in a road accident, and later wrote of his own feelings about this untimely happening which came as a bolt from the blue:

"For me, the demise of Swami Satyabratana is an irreparable loss, which perhaps the world will not hear from my lips.
You are for a higher purpose."

Spreading the message of yoga

Swami Niranjana's father was Swami Satyananda's closest friend, well-wisher and admirer and it was a personal loss for him. When Niranjana heard the news and was asked by Sri Swamiji if he would like to return to be with his mother at this time, he refused, saying, "What will I do by coming back, I know that he is happy up there because he will open a yoga school and further the yoga movement there as well."

So, Swami Niranjana was cut off from the protective support of guru which had nurtured him. In that foreign land, he grew up learning the way to influence others and impress them with his wisdom, knowledge and maturity. We are all used to seeing aged teachers and young students, but here was the opposite, a rare sight indeed, which defied the age old concept that wisdom is the birthright of the elderly. When he started teaching, it was an amusing sight to see aged students learning from a teacher who was a child. That is the respect he commanded even at that young age.

That stint, which lasted eleven years, took him all over Europe, South and Latin America, Australia and New Zealand during which he taught and spread the message of yoga to people from all walks of life. Just before his return to India, on 16th January 1983, he was successful in spearheading the yoga

movement in the USA. During this period the little contact he had with his roots gave him an opportunity to explore other cultures and ways of life. He was able to live freely with no restrictions on what he should do, how he should live, what he should eat, or even which direction he should pursue in life.

He was left free in the midst of a free, progressive and liberal society to make his own choice. Any other young man would definitely have been swayed by the glitter and glamour that confronted him in the heart of the USA, the dreamworld of every youth. But Swami Niranjana had a different bent of mind.

It was at that time, in the midst of material affluence and temptation of every kind, that he made up his mind to further strengthen his resolve to live the life of dedication, commitment and responsibility as a sannyasin. Swami Niranjana himself has said, "The more I interacted with people and learnt their problems,



despite the fact that they had every material comfort and all that they could desire, the more my vairagya grew and I felt a strong desire to live a life of renunciation and service to a higher cause.”

Presidency

By 1982, the yoga movement started by Swami Satyananda was flourishing and the small ashram from where Sri Swamiji commenced his work had moved to the hillock overlooking the Ganga, which Sri Swamiji called Ganga Darshan. Spiritual seekers were flocking to the remote and not so easily accessible town of Munger. The mandate given to him by his guru, Swami Sivananda, to spread yoga ‘from door to door and shore to shore’ was accomplished, as in the short span of twenty years there was no village, town, city, casbah or island where Swami Satyananda had not visited and hoisted the flag of yoga.

Then, at the peak of his accomplishment, Swami Satyananda decided that it was now time for him to move on with his mission and live life with a more universal vision, rather than one that restricted him to institutions, sects and disciples. So he decided to renounce all that he had created, and at the end of 1982, in Puerto Rico, Sri Swamiji called Swami Niranjan and told him, “I’m leaving Munger. You have to come back and take charge of the institution.” Although Swami Niranjan must have known it, he said, “Well, if that is your decision, I will come. But if you ask my choice, I would rather stay here.” That was his answer. Sri Swamiji says, “Swami Niranjan came to Munger, not because of his choice, but because of mine. Who would leave America, a country of opportunities? But anyway, he had to come. Although personally he did not want to return, he had to come back. He is very happy since he has resigned as President of Bihar School of Yoga, because now he can move about freely.”

In accordance with the wishes of his guru and also the beckoning of destiny, Swami Niranjan returned to Munger on 16th January 1983 and a few days later, on 19th January, the day of Basant Panchmi and the foundation day of Bihar School of Yoga, Swami Satyananda inducted him into the Presidency of Bihar School of Yoga and handed over full charge and responsibility to him. The young and lean shoulders of Swami Niranjan took on the mantle which his guru had ordained for him. Thus began his in-road to the temporal duties of administering an international ashram as well as guiding, teaching and preaching to

the followers, spiritual aspirants and devotees of Swami Satyananda.

As Swami Niranjan had been away from Munger and India for about eleven years and had been out of touch with the set up of Munger, at his request Swami Satyananda continued to stay in Munger for five more years until 1988 while Swami Niranjan learnt the ropes. Running



an institution is no easy task, it requires, skill, deftness, agility, humility, spirit of service and leadership qualities. Although Swami Niranjan had a maturity much beyond his years and was well equipped for the task of heading the yoga movement, still the presence of guru is something every disciple yearns for. So, Swami Satyananda granted him this request. Little did

anyone know then that once Sri Swamiji left Munger, he would never turn back and set foot there again. At that time this was an inconceivable idea for each and everyone of us, including Swami Niranjan.

Shepherd to the flock

It must have been the biggest challenge of his life to see his guru leave Munger and know that he may never come back. It must have been heart-breaking too. But he faced it with equanimity, courage and most of all the humility of a true disciple who cannot ever question, even in dream, what the guru says or does. These are the true qualities of greatness. At that time, I was reminded of a line from Rudyard Kipling’s famous poem *If*: ‘If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs then you are a man, my son.’

Swami Satyananda’s departure was a big loss to all in Munger in every sense of the word. People who were there then felt as if they had entered a big vacuum, that everything that they had lived and hoped for had gone from their lives, that the joy of life had disappeared. To fill that vacuum in those people’s lives was the biggest challenge that Swami Niranjan faced, because everyone was in despair and he had to become the shepherd of this flock. Many years later in retrospect, we can see how skilfully he achieved that task. Today, people have great respect for Swami Niranjan and great faith in him. Without any great fanfare, very quietly, in a simple manner, he has won the hearts of each and everyone.

Nowadays, there is very misguided perception of what we consider as ‘greatness’ and who society venerates as role-models. Today’s society reveres and worships those with lots of money, many luxurious possessions, fame and fortune. If we really want to discover greatness amongst us, then we must look deeper than merely skin level and assess the totality of the person, their attributes, their nature, their qualities and ultimately, what they do rather than what they have. Swami Niranjan is one such person who, if assessed from every angle, would be considered a shining example of greatness living amongst us today. He is an astounding example of surrender, personal sacrifice, leadership, service to guru and humanity, and is truly an inspiring role model for youth.

The numerous incidents and stories throughout his life demonstrate that each and every moment has been a step on the path to fulfil his

duty, destiny and dharma. His one-pointed focus, awareness and perseverance to fulfil the immense responsibilities placed upon his shoulders from a very young age is an exemplary example for us all that we too can achieve our goals and destiny if we apply the same enthusiasm and determination throughout our lives, in whatever tasks may be at hand.

Fulfilment of the mission

Swami Satyananda fulfilled the mission given to him by his guru, Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh, to take yoga 'from door to door and shore to shore'. Swami Niranjan has been instrumental in seeing this mandate flourish into the worldwide yoga culture



that we see today. Swami Niranjan has continued the extensive efforts of Swami Satyananda to take yoga to every corner of the world and has not only made 'yoga' a household word, but has taken it through the doors into their homes, making yogic lifestyle a way of life for millions of people around the world.

Swami Niranjan has toured extensively throughout the world. Wherever he goes he is received with open arms by one and all, no matter what country, religion, caste or creed, as people realize and experience that the teachings he imparts are universal truths that go beyond religion or fad. He brings the

ancient teachings of Yoga, Vedanta and Tantra into a modern context and makes them applicable to help people cope with the trials of modern life. The practical application of these ancient wisdoms brings people health of body and mind and gives people not only a few yoga poses, but a whole way of life, a new approach to the timeless problems of humanity.

Due to his extensive travels at a tender age and his innate humanity, Swami Niranjan has a natural ease with people of all types, races, religions and nations. He is able to adapt to each and every situation with versatility and honesty. Swami Niranjan travels to many different countries and cultures, but in each and every place he seems at home with the customs and traditions. He never compromises on the essence of the teachings, or on the topic of the seminar or program, but somehow manages to make the message accessible and applicable no matter what the culture, religion or customs of the audience.

In Australia, he could often be seen having a picnic, of sandwiches on the grass under the gum trees with devotees, or playing with the boisterous children. In Greece, he appreciated a Greek drama performed by the devotees and in Bulgaria, joined in with traditional Bulgarian songs. He has been on safari in South Africa and dined in the most expensive restaurants in Spain and Italy. The enormous spectrum of his experiences all demonstrate his versatility and skill to 'adapt, adjust and accommodate', a central teaching of Swami Satyananda. At each and every moment he always remained focused on his mission and purpose, and was able to win over the hearts and minds of people and bring them the teachings of yogic culture in a way that they would accept and understand.

Spiritual guide

His profound compassion, empathy and wisdom instinctively draws people towards him, both young and old, rich and poor. He is the spiritual guru and guide for millions of devotees and disciples around the world. He addresses and guides in matters not only of the spiritual realm but also those related to life, helping people to deal with their day-to-day emotional, mental, personal and family problems.

Often he is asked by aspirants and spiritual seekers, "What should I do Swamiji?" To this question he rarely gives a direct answer. However, by talking to the person he is able to evoke the individual's innate personal wisdom, so that they can take the most appropriate and informed decision by themselves! By his expert guidance and support most people end up answering their own questions, which in the long run is the best for the individual, as they take responsibility for their own decisions and learn to stand on their own two feet. He skilfully solves people's problems not by telling them the answer, but by awakening within them the wisdom to solve the question themselves and giving them the self-confidence to face the challenges of life.



Swami Niranjan has always upheld the sannyasa tradition to its highest degree. He lives in the world but remains free from the shackles of attachments. He lives in the world but is not of the world, just as a lotus is born in water and lives in water, but is always dry. He has managed to change the perception that spiritual wisdom, peace and bliss are reserved for those recluses in caves who renounce the world. Rather, he is an excellent example of dynamic and active seva to guru and humanity within society. The best leaders lead by example, and Swami Niranjan is an impeccable example of a true sannyasin.

Divine light

During the historic Sat Chandi Mahayajna at Rikhia in 1995, Swami Satyananda formally acknowledged the exemplary life of Swami Niranjan when in front of all the participants he said:

“So, today Swami Niranjan has received his initiation. That initiation is now over. The Mother will be the witness and so will all of you. I am handing over to Swami Niranjan the two greatest assets of my tantric life: the sphaatik mala and sphaatik lingam. I feel assured that he will lead you all amidst the encircling gloom. Whenever there is darkness in your life and you forget the way, he is the one who can tell you where to go and what to do. Swami Niranjan began his twelve years in 1983 and now he has completed them. He has been with me since his birth, but in 1983 I handed over my succession to him, and now it is 1995. Twelve years have passed and he has proved himself. For those twelve years he has lived a hard and strict life.

“Most of the new Munger sannyasins don’t know me. I am as fierce as Bholenath. I am not and never have been a sweet guru. Many disciples have failed because they thought, ‘What kind of a guru is he? Guru should not get angry, guru should not do



this.’ But Swami Niranjan accepted me as I am. Unless a disciple accepts the guru as he is, there is no salvation and no way for him. You should not want the guru to adjust to your image. So, Swami Niranjan has come through with flying colours. It is not after guiding him that I nominated him. Before he was born, before his mother conceived him, I told his father and mother, ‘My successor will be born through you.’ Swami Dharmashakti gave birth to him and she is here today.

“Today the Mother Goddess is the witness and all of you are the witnesses that I have handed over the two priceless treasures of my spiritual life to Swami Niranjan. One is a crystal mala and the other is the crystal lingam. Swami Niranjan has worked very hard. Generally disciples want to see the guru in their self-created image. If this is the case, then the disciple becomes the guru and the guru becomes the disciple. But he never tried to see me in his image. He has always had the feeling, ‘Whatever you want me to do, I will do.’ I have always been a tough guru, but Swami Niranjan accepted me as I was. If you really want to find your guru, you have to accept him in his true form. Once you have decided, ‘This person is my guru,’ then you must accept him as he is. Try and mould yourself in his form, and do not mould him in your form.

“It is very difficult to be a disciple. Nobody becomes a disciple simply by getting initiated or by smoking the pipe of the guru. When a carpenter wants to make something from a piece of wood, he envisions what he will shape and fashions it in his own way. The wood is cut, chiseled and filed, but it does not question the carpenter. Similarly, a piece of cloth does not question the tailor. Leather does not question the shoemaker. I appointed Swami Niranjan as my successor in 1983. Now his twelve years have been completed and I have handed over the sphaatik mala and lingam to him. I have full faith that he will come as a divine light into your spiritual lives, and that you will receive everything from him.”

Smoothing out the rough edges

Right from an early age, Swami Niranjan has demonstrated the skill and agility of a true leader as he manages to smooth all the rough edges with utmost ease while attending to the smallest



details. At times of high pressure, when there are mammoth events, it is not uncommon for him to go for several days without any sleep and still exude grace, poise and composure. Ordinarily, a person of his status who is a guru of millions would just live in comfort, leaving the work load to others. But Swami Niranjan is quite the opposite, he is always there to help out and lend support wherever and whenever needed.

To give just one example of the management feat he achieves daily: at one moment Swami Niranjan is on the phone giving directions in Spanish about a shipment of expected prasada, a moment later he is speaking in Hindi to a devotee in Delhi who needs his guidance, next he is speaking to the Greek ashram which needs his advice on management, and next he is giving directions on the amount of salt to be ordered for the feeding of 20,000 people for the five days of Sat Chandi Mahayajna! After all this, which is only a glimpse of five minutes of his day, he steps into the yajna area of Tapowan to greet a mammoth audience and guides all aspects of the event with clock-work precision and mastery.

The hectic activity and immense pressure Swami Niranjan faces on a day-to-day basis does not in any way override his innate compassion. Once during the yajna at Rikhia at the peak of activity, one morning just as the gates in Tapowan were opened, a very distressed woman from the neighbouring village brought her young son to the ashram gate and was pleading for help as her son had



broken his arm. Her husband was away and she didn't know what to do. Her first and only thought was to come to the ashram.

Swami Niranjana personally enquired as to the woman's distress and told a sannyasin to talk to her, give her directions and contacts as to where to seek appropriate help, as the ashram was not equipped to deal with broken bones! The relief of the woman and her son was profound and they happily walked away as if the son's arm was healed. Sometimes, the greatest help we can give is just to point out the right direction and sometimes the greatest medicine is just to know that someone cares. Swami Niranjana never ceases to care; it's like he has a radar and knows when someone just needs a kind word, a reassuring smile or a push in the right direction.

Despite being the spiritual head of a huge international organization, he repeatedly demonstrates a profound ability to

manage vast events and juggle immense responsibility with vigilant attention to the minutest details. His attention to the details is an example that we can follow and implement in our lives. It's okay to see the big picture, but we should never lose sight that the big picture depends on each and every detail, and the attention to the details brings about the success of the overall picture!

Swan

On 31 December 1989 Swami Niranjana was initiated into the tradition of Paramahansa by Swami Satyananda. The symbol of Paramahansas is the graceful swan. It is no wonder then that people could already see the qualities of grace, poise, elegance and inner beauty which a paramahansa represents, for long before this initiation people the world over started to call him 'Swan'. His simple and quiet nature, his tremendous viveka and vairagya, his ability to discern the real from the unreal, his humaneness and empathy with people all justify his initiation into this sacred line of Paramahansas.

When asked to speak about Swami Niranjana, what Swami Satyananda says sums it up very nicely:

"What is there to say about Swami Niranjana? He is God's gift to me. God put him in my bag. He is just the reverse of me. He is not my carbon copy; he is my fulfilment, my completeness.

Swami Niranjana has been with me since birth. He has given me everything, his youth, his future, his entire life. He has no wife, no child, no bank balance, no property, no ambition and no desire, except service. He always had the feeling, 'Whatever you want me to do, I will do.' I have always been a tough guru, but Swami Niranjana accepted me as I was. I feel assured that he will lead you all amidst the encircling gloom. Whenever there is darkness in your life and you forget the way, he is the one who can guide you. I have full faith that he will come as a divine light into your spiritual lives."

Guru and spiritual guide

Twenty years have passed since Swami Satyananda left the Bihar School of Yoga, Munger, in the full charge and responsibility of Swami Niranjana. In that time he has taken the yoga movement and the establishment at Ganga Darshan, Munger, to new heights. Today, as never before, the yoga teaching as well as

the sannyasa parampara established by Swami Satyananda is flourishing with knowledge and spiritual precepts.

During this period Swami Niranjana was actively involved in preaching, teaching, travelling and administering the establishment at Munger and the ever-increasing centres throughout the world. His acumen in this area is undoubtedly recognized and acknowledged and accepted by each and everyone. Now having handed over the reigns to his successor, Swami Suryaprakash, in the year 2008, Swami Niranjana will move on to the role of guru and spiritual preceptor, so that people the world over may utilize his spiritual prowess for their upliftment.

The flowing river has one day to fuse into the vast and endless ocean. If it refuses to do so in order to retain its own identity, then one day it will dry up and cease to exist. To attain immortality, the disciple has to fuse with guru and move on. That is the secret as well as the eternal law of evolution.





Niranjan,

Just as there is life and beauty in the pollen
that will one day blossom into a flower,
The vibration of beauty is within you,
Be sure to keep radiating this.
Don't let the pollen become tainted,
Always be alert.

Life is a flower
Of truth, auspiciousness, beauty,
Inner fragrance;
From these pollen is made.
A wild shock scatters it before time.
It is vibrant with joy
Some would destroy it with the flower.

New life is there in the pollen
And from this many lives will flourish.
Maintain it carefully.
Restraint, respect, politeness;
They are the pollens of life –
Altruism, compassion, grace;
From these the new life receives breath.
From the pollen atmasadhana grows and endures.
Search for God in the society of humans;
Understand lepers, the blind, the crippled.
Beloved Niranjan,
You are the pollen
Able to make the world beautiful.

Satyans



